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Eileen Chang's "Love in the Fallen City": Translation and Analysis

by

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A THESIS
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Eileen Chang's "Love in the Fallen City": Translation and Analysis submitted by Shu-ning Sciban in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in COMPARATIVE LITERATURE.

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ABSTRACT

Eileen Chang is a Chinese writer who was first popular in Shanghai in the 1940's. She started writing fiction in her childhood, and since then, her works have come to include novels, novelettes, short stories, articles and research essays. The reason that Miss Chang is an outstanding writer in Chinese modern literature is that she has smoothly applied both Chinese traditional and Western writing techniques in her works. Unlike some artists who do not reach fame until after death, Eileen Chang may have been luckier. In her early 20's she was already well-known in Shanghai. Nevertheless, she was never accepted as a real artist by her contemporary critics. It was not until Prof. C. T. Hsia wrote A History of Modern Chinese Fiction in which he devoted one chapter to discuss Eileen Chang's writings that her artistic achievements received more formal affirmation. However, there has still been little serious research done on her or her work since then.

In this thesis, I present: my translation of one of Eileen Chang's more successful writings ("Love in the Fallen City," an example of her unique writing); an analysis of the story; and the results of research into Miss Chang's life and works. I hope that my efforts will serve as a medium for Western readers to know Eileen Chang and appreciate her writing talent.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Now before my graduation, as I look back over the past three years that I have studied in the Department of Comparative Literature in the University of Alberta, I feel extremely grateful to many people. It would have been a near impossible task for a a person like myself who knew so little of both the English language and Western literature to obtain a Master of Arts degree without their help. Among them, I should first thank my parents and husband; they encouraged me to continue my studies in Canada and continually supported me with their love. Secondly, my parents-in-law, Stanley and Joan Sciban, have taken as good care of me as they would their own daughter, allowing me to concentrate on my studies. Thirdly, almost every professor in the U. of A. who has taught me has been a considerate friend and good guide into the realm of literature: Professor G. McGaughey, who in my first year of study spent at least five hours a week to answer questions and correct special assignments arranged to improve my wtiting; Professor S. Munro, who has always shown concern for my studying, teaching, and living conditions (if he is too young to be a father to me, he is at least as caring as a big brother would be); Professor Lin is the teacher who broadened my view of Chinese literature; Professor S. Arnold has always encouraged me and patiently guided my studies in comparative literature. Also needing mention here are the friends who taught me English, lent me their notes and corrected my papers. They also are people that I will always remember.

As for the final draft of this thesis, besides the advice of my supervisor and co-supervisors, Professors Arnold, Munro, and Lin, I would also like to thank my composition teacher, Lisa Alton, for her proofreading, and Becky Crosby, Nancy Gardner, and Ronald Desjardins for their typing assistance.

To all the people I have mentionned above and many other friends who are not named here, I say "THANK YOU!"

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I. INTRODUCTION

"I am a born novelist.'[1]

Eileen Chang

Forty years ago, Miss Chang was one of the most distinguished writer in Shanghai; the remuneration she received was much greater than that of other writers. The demand for her works was so great that sometimes publishers would ask her to give them her old writings. From 1943 to 1945, she published eighteen short stories and novelettes, plus a collection of essays which included thirty articles. There are very few writers who can match Chang's prolific output. However, while her works won the hearts of Shanghai readers, they drew little attention from contemporary critics. Xun Yu, one of the few who publicly discussed her writings in her time, pointed out, "Our [Chinese] writers have always despised techniques. Since the May Fourth Movement, they have wasted tremendous efforts on the battle of ---isms."[2] Xun Yu's opinion highlights the difference between Eileen Chang and the majority of her contemporaries, and may explain why other critics neglected her writing at the time. Eileen Chang has never advocated any doctrine in her stories, and because of this, her few commentators have criticized them as being shallow. However, Eileen Chang is not a naive writer; she knows what her goal is. Once she claimed that she didn't intend to write memorials of the age; instead, she wanted to depict a world where every generation lives and the common human being can be found everywhere.[3] Nevertheless, the beauty of Chang's art, recognized by both the critics who like and dislike her, is her mastery of writing techniques and her skill with imagery, symbols and psychological description.

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[1] Eileen Chang, "Tong Yan Wu Ji" ("The Guileless Words of a Child"), in Liu Yan (Gossips)(Taipei: Huang Guan Publishing Inc., 1984), p. 14. (From this point on, when Liu Yan is referred to, the abbreviation, Chang, Gossips, will be used to designate it.)

[2] Xun Yu, "Lun Zhang Ai-ling De Xiao Shuo" (On Eileen Chang's Stories), in Zhang Ai-ling Yan Jiu (The Research on Eileen Chang), ed. Tang Wen-biao (Taipei: Lian Jing Publishing Inc., 1983), p. 116. (From this point on, when Zhang Ai-ling Yan Jiu is referred to, the abbreviation, Tang, The Research, will be used to designate it.)

In the preface to Shui Jing's The Art of Eileen Chang's Fiction, Professor C.T. Hsia sighed: "It is a shame that literary criticism is not well-developed; otherwise, there should have been many books discussing Eileen Chang's brilliant achievement."[4] Written with the feeling that many Chinese authors and literature circles are somehow indebted to her, this thesis will: introduce Eileen Chang to the Western reader; outline her life and main works; analyse "Love in the Fallen City"; and present translator's notes and my translation of "Love in the Fallen City." Perhaps this can help lead to a comparatively just understanding of this talented writer.

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[3] Eileen Chang, "Zi Ji De Wen Zhang" ("My Writings"), in Chang, Gossips, pp. 22-3.

[4] C.T. Hsia, the preface of Shui Jing's Zhang Ai-ling De Xiao Shuo Yi Shu (The Art of Eileen Chang's Fiction) (Taipei: Da di Publishing Inc., 1975), p. 9. (From this point on, when Zhang Ai-ling De Xiao Shuo Yi Shu is preffered to, the abbreviation, Shui Jing, The Art. will be used to designate it.)

A. Life and Work

Eileen Chang was born in 1921, in Shanghai, the largest city in China at that time. Because of its location, Shanghai was originally a prosperous city. In the early twentieth century, there were many foreign concessions in Shanghai which were out of the Chinese government's jurisdiction. After the revolution in 1911, Shanghai had become the refuge of the officials of the preceding dynasty and the rich from other provinces. During the war against the Japanese invasion, Shanghai attracted even more Chinese citizens, most of whom were trying to elude the Japanese bullets. For her cosmopolitan hometown, Eileen Chang possesses intimate feelings. She once said: "Shangainese are traditional Chinese who also have tempered themselves with the high pressure from modern life. The interaction between the deformed products from new and old cultures, as a result, may not be very healthy; however, there is a kind of unique wisdom among them."[5] Her special feelings for Shanghai probably caused her to choose it as a setting for many of her stories.

Another extraordinary factor which influences Eileen Chang's writing is her family. Miss Chang comes from an illustrious family: her grand-father, Chang Pei-lun, was a distinguished official in the Manchu court and was married to the daughter of Li Hong-zhang, who had been prime minister in the Ching Dynasty. Her family background offered her the chance to obtain a proper education. Before attending school, she was educated in the traditional way -- private tutoring in Chinese classics. However, it was her mother who imparted a rudimentary knowledge of reading to her when she was only three, an age at which she was already reciting pieces of Tang Poetry from memory. At the age of eight, she first saw Dream of the Red Chamber[6] and had read Pilgrims to the West[7] several times. This "baptism of literature" at such a young age is impressive; however no matter how rich the educational environment provided by her rich family, her talent must surely have been mostly a product of her own intelligence.

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[5] Eileen Chang, "Dao Di Shi Shanghai Ren" ("After All, I Am a Shanghainese"), in Chang, Gossips, p. 56.

Eileen Chang's writing interests were also revealed very early. In her "A Dream of Being a Genius" we learned that the first story, a family tragedy, was written when she was seven. Within the same year, she composed another two stories; one about a young lady who commits suicide after losing her lover; the other a historical story set in the time of the Sui and Tang Dynasties. At eight, she tried to write a Utopian story titled "Happy Village." In an interview in the newspaper New China, she stated, "I have always wanted to make a career out of writing. Since I first learned to read, I've tried all kind of stories...."[6] Along with her interest in writing, drawing and music were her hobbies from childhood. The sensual stimulation of colors, sounds and words all brought her mental enjoyment. The best description of her attachment to these elements is shown in the following remarks:

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[6] Hong Lou Mong (Dream of the Red Chamber) was written by Cao Xue-qin (?-1763).

[7] Xi You Ji (Pilgrims to the West) was written by Wu Cheng-en (1500-1582).

> Toward colors, notes of music, words, I am very sensitive. When I am playing the piano, I imagine the eight notes with different characteristics, wearing resplendent outfits and dancing hand in hand. When I practice writing, I like to use those strong-colored and sonorous words. ...Even till now, I still like to read *The Strange Tales of a Studio* [*Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*] and vulgar reports of Paris fashion only because of the attractive words.[7]

Eileen Chang's keen sensitivity was brought out partly by her nature and partly by her mother's encouragement. By Miss Chang's account, her mother was a beautiful and sensitive woman. Although the time she spent with Eileen was scant because of her unhappy marriage, her artistic temperament strongly influenced her daughter. She sent Eileen to learn piano when she was nine, took Eileen to concerts and instructed her on how to use colors in her painting. More significant paragraphs are the ones in Miss Chang's "Whispered Words":

---

[6] "Nu Zuo Jia Ju Tan Hui" ("A Forum of Female Writers"), in *Zhang Ai-ling Jun* (*On Eileen Chang*,) ed. Tang Wen-biao (Taipei: Yuan Jing Publishing Inc., 1983), p. 229. (From this point on, when *Zhang Ai-ling Jun* is referred to, the abbreviation, Tang, *On Eileen Chang*, will be used to designate it.)

[7] Eileen Chang, "Tian Cai Mong" ("A Dream of Being a Genius"), in *Zhang Kan* (*Chang's Outlook*) (Taipei: Huang Guan Publishing Inc., 1976), p. 278. (From this point on, when *Zhang Kan* is referred to, the abbreviation, Chang, *Chang's Outlook*, will be used to designate it.

> Once when I saw a flower placed between the leaves of a book and heard my mother telling its story, my tears flowed unexpectedly. My mother saw that and said to my brother: "Look, your sister is not crying for having no candy." Being praised, I felt happy and the tears stopped soon. Then, I was embarrassed.[10] Short Story Magazine was publishing Lao She's Er Ma. The magazine was sent to us monthly. My mother sat on the toilet to read it. She laughed and read it aloud, and I leaned against the door frame, laughing also. Therefore, even till now, I still like Er Ma, although Lao She's later works, Divorce and Train, are both much better than Er Ma.[11]

Mrs. Chang not only read her daughter's stories but also sometimes gave opinions about them. However, it seems that all distinguished families have their fatal problems and the main ones of the Changs were the conflicts between Mr. and Mrs. Chang. In autobiographical essays, Eileen Chang never directly indicates what the conflicts were about. Nevertheless, from a description of her father we may find some clues. Mr. Chang was a member of the old-style gentry. Though he may have done superficial studies of Western literature (Eileen Chang once found one of her father's books, Shaw's Heartbreak House, with his name, address, and the year of purchase, in English), basically, he still lived by traditional Chinese concepts and the bad habits of a corrupted scion of a prosperous family. He took a concubine outside the home and was addicted to opium. These were probably the most serious reasons why Mrs. Chang left her husband and children to study abroad with Mr. Chang's sister for years. The first time she left was when Eileen was four and she didn't return until four years later. In Eileen's own words, Mrs. Chang was crying bitterly on the day of her departure.[12]

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[10] Eileen Chang, "Si Yu" ("Whispered Words"), in Chang, Gossips, p. 147.

[11] Ibid.

During the years of her mother's first journey abroad, Eileen's life was rather exciting. First of all, Mr. Chang's concubine moved into their house; then, there were frequent parties. Eileen often hid behind the curtains, peeking at the gorgeously-dressed prostitutes. Her father's concubine would take her to the dance hall at night, and didn't bring her home till three or four o'clock in the morning.

When she was eight, Eileen's mother returned to China. Shortly before her return home, Mr. Chang had split up with the concubine. Hence the husband and wife restored their realtionship. It was during this period that Eileen Chang enjoyed a happy and normal family life. Describing her home during this time, she said: "I thought everything at home was the summit of beauty."[13] However, the happiness didn't last long. When Eileen was about ten, her parents agreed to a divorce which inaugurated "the dark ages" of Eileen Chang's life.

After the marriage had broken down, Mrs. Chang set out on her second trip abroad to learn painting in France; Eileen was sent to a boarding school to begin her formal education, and her father walked into his second marriage. The sensitive young girl's reaction to her father's remarriage was rather agitated and acute:

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[12] Eileen Chang, "Si Yu" ("Whispered Words"), in Chang, Gossips, p. 144.

[13] Ibid., p. 147.

> The first time my aunt told me this news was on a summer's night, on a small balcony. I cried because I'd read many stories about stepmothers, and I never thought it would happen to me. I felt desperate; no matter what, I couldn't let it happen. If that woman had been in front of me, bending over the metal railings, I would definitely have pushed her over the balcony, which would have solved the problem once and for all.[14]

After the wedding, Eileen didn't get along with her stepmother. In "The Guileless Words of a Child," She described these feelings:

> There was a period I was taken care of by my stepmother. I can never forget a cotton robe whose dark color was like ground beef. I wore it for a long time; it seemed it would last forever. felt like there were chilblains all over my body. hen the winter had passed, the chilblains were still there----I was so disgusted and ashamed. Mainly because of having a sense of inferiority, I was not happy in my middle school life, and made very few friends.[15]

In his article, "About Eileen Chang," Mr. Wang Hong-sheng, Eileen's teacher in middle school, gave a description of her at that time:

> When Eileen Chang's reputation for writing gradually spread in the school, Eileen was usually the subject of talk in the teachers' offices. Hence, I knew some kind of unhappiness in Eileen's family made her become a quiet person, who didn't make friends, was lazy, not active, and dispirited.[16]

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[14] Eileen Chang, "Si Yu" ("Whispered Words"), in Chang, Gossips, p. 149.

[15] Chang, Gossips, p. 12.

[16] Wang Hong-sheng, "Ji Zhang Ai-ling" ("Recalling Eileen Chang"), in Zhang Ai-ling Zi Liao Da Quan Ji (The Collection of the Data About Eileen Chang), ed. Tang Wen-biao (Taipei: Shi Bao Publishing Inc., 1984), p. 255. (From this point on, when Zhang Ai-ling Zi Liao Da Quan Ji is referred to, the abbreviation, Tang, The Collection , will be used to designate it.

Therefore, Eileen stayed in school most of the time and seldom went home. She studied hard with the hope that she could go to a university in England after graduation. During this stage of depression, Eileen Chang never gave up her writing. In elemetary school, she wrote "The Ideal Village in Ideal" and a story of a love triangle. In middle school, with her Chinese teacher Mr. Wang Hong-sheng's encouragement, she wrote "A Modern Dream of the Red Chamber," "Ox" and "The Departure of the Supreme Chief and the Beauty." These three works were all published in the school's student publication. In school, she became the focus of public eye. This was the first time she was recognized for her writing. In "A Dream of Being a Genius," she explicitly affirmed the value of her school life, which implied her writing experience: "In school, I obtained the chance of developing myself freely; my self-confidence grew stronger day after day."[17]

In 1937 when she graduated from middle school, her mother returned from France, which caused turmoil for the Chang family and was a turning point in Eileen's life. She went to see her mother frequently, which aroused anger and jealousy in her father and stepmother. One day she returned from a two-week visit with her mother, she had a heated fight with her stepmother and father. After being beaten, she was locked up for over half a year by her father, who, in his indignation threatened to kill her with a pistol. In

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[17] Chang, Chang's Outlook, p. 278.

"Whispered Words," she writes:

> I know my father would not kill me. The worst would be to lock me up for a few years. However, when he let me out, it was not the same me. Within a few weeks, I felt I had aged several years. I tightly grasped the wooden railings on the balcony, it seemed that I could extract some water out of the railing. Above was the broad, blue sky. During those days, the sky was noisy because it was filled with airplanes [It was during the war in China.] I hoped a bomb would drop on our house, even if I would die with them [her father and stepmother?.''

Consulting The Three Musketeers and The Count of Monte-Cristo, she racked her brain to plan her escape. During her internment, she had serious dysentery and almost died. Her father didn't send for a doctor; nor did he buy her medicine. On a winter's night six months later when she was better and had enough energy to stand up, she ran away to her mother's place. Her stepmother gave away all her belongings, pretending Eileen was dead. Eileen Chang remarked: "This was the end of my connection with that home."'' In all of her autobiographical essays, Eileen Chang showed little affection for her father. Whenever she mentioned him, it was always in a tone of depression and sadness; if she had loved him once, too many unhappy memories had forced her to close the door between them. Toward her one year younger brother, she felt sympathetic because she thought he also was a victim of their unhealthy family environment. When they were small, although sometimes she liked to compete with him (because he was a boy, and according to the traditional concept, he was more important

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''Chang, Gossips, p. 152.
''Ibid., p. 154.

to the family), she still had fraternal love for him. When Eileen was staying in the boarding school, her brother remained in the home with their father. According to Eileen, her brother's life at that stage was not easy; it eventually made him into a backward person with no urge to progress. In "Younger Brother," the last section of "The Guileless Words of a Child," she recorded the complexity of her feeling about him:

> At the dining table, for a trifle, my father slapped him on his face. I was astonished and shielded my face with my rice bowl; the tears rolled down. My stepmother laughed, "Hey, what are you crying for? Your father didn't mean you. See, he [her brother] isn't crying, but you are." I put down the bowl, ran into the bathroom, locked the door and sobbed silently. I stood in front of the mirror, watching my trembling face, the fast-running tears, just like a close-up in the movies. Gnashing my teeth, I grunted," "I must get revenge! I must get revenge one day!" The window of the bathroom was facing toward the balcony. "Bang!" A ball hit the glass and rebounded back. My brother was kicking the ball on the balcony. He had already forgotten that incident. Things like this, he was very used to. I stopped crying, only feeling a chilly sadness.[20]

The summer after Eileen escaped from her father's house, her brother also came along saying that he was not going back. "My mother explained that," Eileen wrote, "her money was only enough to support one person's education; therefore, she could not take him in. He cried; I stood beside, also crying."[21] In her short story "Jasmine Tea," the protagonist is believed to be the reflection of her own brother: they possess very similar figures, personalities and family background. Through the detailed description of the protagonist, the reader can perceive the compassion combined with a little of the scorn that the narrator felt for him.

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[20] Chang, Gossips, p. 18.

[21] Ibid, p. 154.

As for her mother, Eileen Chang showed deeper concern toward her. She said: "...I had always loved my mother with a romantic love. She was a beautiful and sensitive woman, but I seldom had a chance to be close to her. When I was four, she went abroad. She came back several times but left again. In a child's eye, she was distant and mysterious."[22] However, during the two years after leaving her father, when Eileen really lived with her mother, their relationship was not as harmonious as she had expected it would be. In "Whispered Words," she reveals the depression she felt:

> In father's home, I had been used to being alone. Suddenly I had to learn how to conduct myself in society, moreover, to learn to be a "lady" in a poverty-stricken situation; I felt these ambitions to be extremely difficult [to achieve]. In the meantime, I could see my mother had sacrificed a lot on my account, and yet she still wondered if I was worth the sacrifices. I also wondered myself.
> ... Looking up at the scorching sun directly overhead, I felt I was standing naked under the sky, and like all of the frightened young people, I was judged as being afflicted by excessive self-conceit and self-deprecation.
> At that, mother's home was no longer amiable.[23]

The main cause of friction between the mother and daughter was their difficult economic situation. To any other ordinary mother and daughter, the same problem may strengthen their relationship; however, Eileen and her mother were both delicate sensitive persons. Eileen clearly concluded: "Asking for money had been an intimate and interesting matter in the beginning...but afterwards, asking for money in her difficult situation, I suffered because of her temper and because of my ungratefulness. Those trivial embarrassments ruined my love little by little."[24] The last news we have of Eileen's mother is from Mr. Zhou Shou-juan, the editor of the journal, The Violet. According to him, Mrs. Chang was somewhere in India in 1942.

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[22] Chang, Gossips, p. 10.
[23] Chang, Gossips, pp. 154-5.

As many writers affected by their early experiences, Eileen Chang's unusual family life shows its influence in her later works. One of the most significant themes in her works is the examination of human relationships which in her thinking are supposed to be always embarrassing, sometimes intolerable and terrifying. The ten stories except, "Love in the Fallen City" (first published in 1944), in her first book Romances, are all tragedies, or, at least sad stories.

In the ten stories, we find that very few characters have harmonious relationships with those around them, not even with their families. In her famous novelette "The Golden Cangue," for instance, Qi-qiao, the heroine, purposely corrupts her son and obstructs her daughter's chances for education and marriage; in "Ashes of Descending Incense, First Brasier," Mrs. Liang entraps her niece and sends her to the road of prostitution; in "The Glazed Tiles," Mr. and Mrs. Yao intend to profit themselves from their daughters' marriages.

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[24] Chang, Gossips, p. 10.

The deeds of these characters are horrible or disgusting, unacceptable to some readers, or even, it seems to Eileen Chang herself: according to her, the material of her writing always has to brew for ten or twenty years before she can commit it to paper.[25] The ten stories must reflect much of the family concept which she derived from her early experiences. Mr. Hu Lan-cheng, Eileen Chang's first husband, said in his "A Girl in the Republic," "I...thought one must miss his childhood, but she [Eileen] didn't. ...Moreover, she told me with perfect assurance that she didn't like her parents. She lived alone. She had a brother who came to visit her occasionally, but she also showed no emotion for him."[26]

Although Eileen Chang had an unhappy life in her early days, she was not psychologically paralysed; nor did she become a cynical writer. Besides emotionless characters in her works, there are some touching descriptions of characters who possess human beings' noble and precious feelings for others. For instance, in A Half-lifetime Love, in contrast to her sister Man-lu, Man-zhen is characterized as responsible, loving, and understanding. In The Rouge of the North, different from Ge Shan, Huang Juan is a person of principle. Her sacrifice for Liu Quan was one of the two climaxes in the novel. In The Rice-sprout Song, Jin-gen is presented as humble farmer whose love for his sister, wife and child is as equally dignified for as any other elder brother, husband or father is. This aspect of Eillen Chang's works seems to have hardly been discussed or noticed, which is unfair to such a serious writer. In his The Research of Eileen Chang, Tang Wen-biao criticized that the world of Eileen Chang's works was a dead one, where there was no hope...etc.[27] Professor C.T. Hsia was comparatively more correct in A History of Modern Chinese Fiction; he asserted that Eileen is a pessimist, who "can be as gay and satiric as Jane Austen, but behind her comic surface is a profound impersonal sorrow over the perversity and pettiness of all passions."[28] Also, there is one more thing we must know: although being pessimistic about life, Eileen Chang does not depict only the dark side of the world and ignore the bright side; on the contrary, she presents both. That is why her stories are successful and touching to the reader. She may sometimes frighten us with some events but a careful reader should be able to realize the author's complete message.

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[25] Shui Jing, "Chan" ("Cicada"), in Shui Jing, The Art, pp. 31-2.

[26] Xu Lan-cheng, "Min Guo Nu Zi" ("A Girl in the Republic"), in Tang, On Eileen Chang, p. 130.

Because of many radical changes after her graduation from middle school, Eileen Chang did not write any stories for two years; she simply concentrated on her studies, preparing for the entrance exam for the University of London which was held in Shanghai. In 1939, she obtained admission to the University of London, but did not go because of the war in Europe; she entered the University of Hong Kong instead. The University of Hong Kong was like an aristocratic university where there were all kinds of students: Europeans, Asians, Eurasians and the children of rich overseas Chinese. Eileen Chang met many people there, some of whom sometime appear in her stories such as "Ashes of Descending Incense, First Brasier," "Ashes of Descending Incense, Second Brasier," "The Youth Years" and so on. The description of those people adds an exotic atmosphere in those stories, and also widens the range of her writing material. In the multicoloured environment of Hong Kong, Eileen seemed full of life; she studied hard and was full of hope for the future; she met her best friend Yan Ying, an Indian girl from Ceylon, who, like Eileen, also possessed an artistic temperament. Later when Eileen Chang went to Shanghai and the United States, Yan Ying was also there with her. Miss Chang had also done some translation of Yan Ying's writings. In the University of Hong Kong, her studies were so successful that she won two scholarships, but, unfortunately, she was forced to quit school and returned to Shanghai in 1942 because Hong Kong was taken over by the Japanese.

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[27] Tang Wen-biao, "Yi Ji Yi Ji Zou Mei You Guang De Suo Zai" ("Walking into the Place Without Light Step by Step"), in Tang, The Research, p. 56.

[28] C.T. Hsia, A History of Modern Chinese Fiction (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 392. (From this point on, when A History of Modern Chinese Fiction is referred to, the abbreviation, Hsia, A History, will be used to designate it.)

During the three years in Hong Kong, Eileen Chang did not write a single word of Chinese. She explained: "To practice English, I even used English when I wrote letters,"[29] and it was a good rest for her because when she returned to Shanghai she started to write again and was extremely productive.[30] Truely, for soon after she began to write again, Eileen Chang became a professional writer and achieved the climax of her writing career. Most of her works, including the famous ones, were written between 1943 and 1945. Besides novels and short stories, she also wrote essays and plays. In 1944, her first story collection, Romances, was published in Shanghai, and included "Ashes of Descending Incense, First Brasier," "Ashes of Descending Incense, Second Brasier," "The Glazed Tiles," "Love in the Fallen City," "Jasmine Tea," "The Heart Sutra," "The Youth Years," "The Golden Cangue," "A Withered Flower" and "Blockade." The next year, her first collection of essays, Gossips, included thirty works also came out. In addition to being a novelist, Miss Chang worked for Shanghai's English newspaper Time as a play and movie critic, and wrote articles for the English journal Twentieth Century which indicated that her writing ability had extended to English.

Eileen Chang is a person who takes her privacy seriously. Information about her private life as an adult is very rare. In Hu Lan-Cheng's A Girl in the Public, however, we learn that Miss Chang married him in 1944. Their marriage broke up three years later because of Mr. Hu's intimate relationships with other women. (With this information, some people may suspect that Eileen Chang's pessimistic view of love is derived from the failure of her first marriage. This is a dangerous hypothesis because Miss Chang's pessimism had been shown on many subjects including love, in those stories written before she met Mr. Hu.)

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[29] Eileen Chang, "Cun Gao" ("Unpublished Writings"), in Chang, Gossips, p. 122.
[30] Ibid., p. 123.

Since 1945, Eileen Chang's creative work was slowed down. Before the Chinese Communists took over China, she published only two stories, "Splendid Love" and "The Endless Love," in 1947. In the same year, her revised edition of Romances also came out (the title of this edition was changed to Eileen Chang's Short Stories Collection in 1954, reprinted in Hong Kong). Besides the original ten stories, included are another five stories and a poem written before 1945. The new stories are: "Lingering Love," "Happiness of Matrimony," "Red Rose and White Rose" and "Indian Summer, A-hsiao's Autumnal Lament." In 1948, she wrote a novel, Eighteen Springs printed in Yi Bao in Shanghai under a pen name "Liang Jing." (The epilogue of Eighteen Springs was later revised and the title changed to A Half-time Love in 1969.)

There is nothing known to biographers about the two years of Eileen Chang's life lived in China under Communist rule from 1949 to 1951. In 1952, she ran away from China and reappeared in Hong Kong. According to Professor C.T. Hsia, she was working in the office of the United States Information Service in Hong Kong during her residence in

Hong Kong. In the meantime, she finished another two novels: The Rice-sprout Song(1954) , and The Rouge of the North (1954).

In the preface of The Rice-sprout Song and the postscript of The Rouge of the North, we find that during her two years in Red China, she had always lived in Shanghai. The story of The Rouge of the North is real except she changed the names of people and places, and reorganized many plots. As for The Rice-sprout Song, it is a story of farmers' difficult lives in Communist China around the 1950's that she developed from many news articles she had read. One thing worth mentioning here is that in these two novels, the theme Eileen Chang dealt with is broader than in her previous works, which indicates that Eileen Chang is not only a romance writer; furthermore, as many great writers, she also possesses the universal compassion for mankind, which is not an element in most romances.

In 1955, Miss Chang immigrated to the United States. Since then, except for a visit to Taiwan in 1960, she has always lived in the States. In November 1955, she met Dr. Hu Shih in New York. In 1956, she went to New England. In 1958, she received a scholarship from the Hartford Foundation and lived in southern California for half a year. In 1966, she was a writer in residence in Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. In 1967-1969 she went to Cambridge, Massachusetts as a fellow in Radcliffe Institute. After, she went to the University of California in Berkley, to work in the Center for Chinese Studies as a researcher from 1969 to 1971, and has been living in California since. In this period, she had very few publications. The only works she wrote were: "Stale Mates," a short story published in 1959, The Bitter Woman, an enlarged version of her previous novelette, "The Golden Cangue," published in 1966, Chang's Outlook, her second collection of essays published in 1976 (except for "To Remember Dr. Hu Shih"[1974], "Talking About Reading"[1974] and "A Proscript to Talking About Reading"[1974], the other works in this collection were all written before 1945), and "The Discipline of Sensuality," a short story published in 1979.

Many people have questioned why such a talented writer would have stopped writing after she immigrated into the States. Only Eileen Chang herself can answer this question accurately. As an observer, I have only two conjectures. The first one is that her academic research has minimized time for creative work. She has written two books, the result of her research, The Nightmare of the Red Chamber (including five research papers about Dream of the Red Chamber) published in 1977, and a critical edition of Sing-song Girls of Shanghai. (The original Sing-song Girls of Shanghai was writen in Su Zhou dialect; Miss Chang added the explanation and the critical notes for it and published the new edition in 1981.) My second conjecture is a sad one. Before we come to it let us read a paragraph which Miss Chang wrote forty years ago:

> ...I think a writer should be like a tree in the yard. He was born there and is deep-rooted there. The higher he grows, the broader his horizon will be, and the further he can see. If he wants to develop in other places, he may be able to do so. However depending on the wind blowing the seeds to a distant land, and growing out another tree is after all very difficult.[31]

Probably, because she is far away from her native land, she has lost the inspiration to write.

In 1971, in the interview with Shui Jing, Miss Chang said that she still had in her mind some things to write, but till now we have not seen anything. However, like fireworks, although they only appear for a few seconds, their brilliancy and beauty always remains in our minds. Let us conclude with a quotation from Professor C.T. Hsia:

> In terms of the entire accomplishment, naturally Eileen Chang is not comparable to Henry James, which, I think, is wholly the problem of sublimity and the resistance of the creative power. Shiu Jing was right; the period that Eileen Chang's strongest desire for creating was within the three or four years after the publication of "Ashes of Descending Incense" (1943). At that time, her talent is brimming in almost every story. ... Of course, if Eileen Chang will not write anymore, she has already won an extremely high position in the history of Chinese Literature.[32]

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[31] Eileen Chang, "Xie Shemma" ("What to Write"), in Chang, Gossips, p. 124.
[32] Shui Jing, The Art, pp. 8-9.

B. An Analysis of "Love in the Fallen City"

1. Theme

In an interview with Shui Jing, Eileen Chang asserted that Lu Xun had been skillful in exposing the dark side and the depravity of the Chinese character, but after Lu Xun's death, the tradition of his writing style had suddenly broken off, which was a real pity.[33] This commentary reveals that Eileen Chang was aware of the problems existing in the Chinese society in which she lived; and it reveals furthermore that those problems may have motivated her writing. In her stories, therefore, she often depicts human weaknesses such as the desire for money and social status, passion, meanness, selfishness, hypocrisy and the inherent limitations of each individual. The range of the people she portrays is broad, including male and female, young and old, foreigners and Chinese, poor and rich, lords and servants. Sometimes the life-like portraits of the characters in her stories shock the reader, such as Cao Qi-qiao in "The Golden Cangue," Mrs. Liang in "Ashes of Descending Incense, First Brazier" and the Bai family in "Love in the Fallen City."

"Love in the Fallen City" is a tragicomic novelette, published in the Shanghai Magazine in September 1943. It is a story about a divorced woman who, because of her family's sarcasm and mockery, left Shanghai for Hong Kong with a plan to remarry, and finally succeeded in acquiring an "ideal" husband. In this simple plot, the author challenges herself with a difficult task of describing the breakdown of the family image.

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[33] Shui Jing, The Art, pp. 27-8.

An important doctrine in Chinese tradition is the "Wu Lun," the five human relationships: between sovereign and subjects, father and son, husband and wife, among brothers and among friends. Of these five major types of human relations, three deal specifically with family relations. Obviously then, the family unit is the center of Chinese culture, and harmonious family relationships is a primary goal of people. It is on this base that the social structure is firmly built. However, the family that Eileen Chang portrays in "Love in the Fallen City" betrays the traditional family image. At the very beginning of the story, we learn that Bai Liu-su, the protagonist, has returned to her home after her divorce. However, several years later when her brothers have spent all of the money she brought back, she becomes an idler in her family eyes. The news of her ex-husband's death is a fuse which leads to the explosion of the Bai's animosity toward her.

In the family quarrel, although the Third and Fourth Madams' attitudes are the most formidable ones, the Third Master's use of the same tone, combined with the fourth Master's chiming in with the others, is equally, if not more, agitating; this is because the two womens are only Liu-su's sisters-in-law, while the two men are her own brothers. However, most unbearable for Liu-su is Old Mrs.

Bai's indifference. Though she does not assail Liu-su directly, her lack of concern for her own daughter reveals that she is aligned in the same stance as the masters and madams. Furthermore, the traditional mother image is destroyed here, and "home" which has always been regarded as the eternal shelter in life is here condemned as a form of hell on earth.

In the author's conceptualization, all human beings are limited in some aspects of their nature, and in this limitless and changeable universe, everything is fragile. By the token, the love that the Bais had for Liu-su is crushed under the pressure of their difficult financial situation. When actually defending his own selfishness, the Third Master says: " Laws are changed every day, while the natural feelings and human relationships that I'm talking about are unchangeable"(p. 77).[34] This is an acute satire on himself as well as on all the Bais. Professor Hsia asserts that in Eileen Chang's stories "satire is not an exhortation to good conduct but an adjunct to tragic understanding. It thrives on the spectacle of human folly."[35] This is the best explanatory note of the Third Master's remarks quoted here. The reason that the author chooses the family as the target she attacks may be related to her own antagonistic relationship with her father and complicated emotions toward her mother which were explained in the previous section.

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[34] This and all following page numbers whose source is not designated refer to the pagination of this thesis.

[35] Hsia, A History, p. 415.

What is especially significant is that the relationship between the author and her mother was spoiled by the same factor as that between Liu-su and her family: a financial problem. In many case, if a family relationship cannot withstand the pressures of the external world, there is no relationship that can. Thus, the breakdown of the family image described in the story reveals the author's disappointment in her society, and moreover, in the world in which she lived.

Nevertheless, Liu-su's tragedy is not only in having married the wrong man and not being accepted by her own family, but, even worse, being a woman, and a woman who does "not have much education" and who is "not strong enough to do anything physical"(p. 85) in a conservative society. Therefore, she could apply her intelligence and careful thought only to searching for a permanent "meal ticket." Perhaps Bai Liu-su's background has its own particularity; however, the tragedy of being a woman in a restrictive culture is a common one.

In almost every conservative society, women are treated more or less as second-class beings. They cannot have individuality; they are only generalized in the categories of daughter, wife and mother. Men usually don't think of women as highly as they think of themselves; unfortunately, sometimes women accept it and even look down upon their own kind. In the story, there are two passages which obviously reflect the author's opinions of this morbid phenomenon. The first one is the description of Liu-su's inner feeling after returning from her sister Bao-luo and Fan Liu-yuan's marriage interview. Because Fan Liu-yuan had shown more interest in her than in Bao-luo, Liu-su thought, "In her heart, Bao-luo must certainly be cursing her, probably even a lot more unpleasantly than Fourth Madam had. However, she knew that although Bao-luo hated her, still, she would now look at her with new eyes, regarding her with deep respect"(p. 97). Moreover, Liu-su concludes: "It doesn't matter how good a woman is, if she can't obtain a man's love, she can't win respect from the members of her own sex. Women are really low that way"(p. 97). Although this seems only to be Liu-su's comentary on her sister and sisters-in-law, it actually implies the author's judgement on them all and vaguely reveal her lament for their lives in that kind of environment.

The second passage, which is an even more lamentable one, unfolds when Liu-su first returns from Hong-Kong. The Bais, who symbolize the members of the decadent bourgeoisie believe: "Liu-su had seduced Fan Liu-yuan for nothing but his money. If she had really gotten his money, she wouldn't have returned home so quietly. Obviously she hadn't obtained anything from him"(p. 133). Then, there comes their specious commentary: "Ordinarily, when woman falls into a man's trap, she should die for her sins, but if a woman entraps a man, that makes her even more of a whore. If a woman wants to entrap a man but fails and on the contrary falls into the man's trap, then she is doubly a whore. Killing her would defile the knife"(p. 133). The Bais have been created as villainous characters in this story, and their judgements invariably arouse the reader's antipathy against them. Hence, although the commentary is made against Liu-su, it is actually a sharp satire of the faulty and ridiculous prejudice toward females.

However, our heroine seems merely to feel the pain that the injustice causes her, but is not aware of the injustice itself. After returning from Hong-Kong, Liu-su receives a more serious humiliation from the Bais than ever before, but still she decides to stay with the family. The following describes her consideration:

> She had already lost affection and felt no responsibility for the family. She had thought about looking for a job to support herself in a simple lifestyle. Although it wouldn't be easy, it was still better than staying at home taking their guff. However, taking a low-class job would make her lose her status as a lady. That status was actually useless, but to give it up would be a pity. Especially at the present time, she still hadn't given up hope on Fan Liu-yuan, so she couldn't degrade herself; otherwise, he would have more excuses for refusing to mary her. Hence, no matter what, she had to restrain herself for a while.(p. 134)

The reader may laugh at Liu-su's naivete regarding the meaning of her existence, but through the detailed description of her inner feelings they accept her shallowness and understand that Liu-su is also the result and victim of unhealthy, prejudiced environment. Therefore, they understand that there are many indescribable grievances behind Liu-su's surrender to Liu-yuan. As it is said, "If she had been overpowered only by Fan Liu-yuan's manner and looks, it would have been another story, but the most painful part was the pressure that her family put on her" (p. 135). In the epilogue, even though Liu-su's aspiration is fulfilled, the only thing she can really boast of is the financial security with which Liu-yuan can provide her. On that note, the narrator ironically refers to the very rarely occuring happy ending as a last commentary on Liu-su's tragic role as a woman.

In "On Writing," Eileen Chang declares the "Love in the Fallen City" was drawn form the atmosphere of the poem "Pih-chow" in The Book of Poetry (Pei Feng).[34] The whole poem is as follows:

> It floats about, that boat of cypress wood;
> Yea, it floats about on the current.
> Disturbed am I, and sleepless,
> As if suffering from a painful wound.
> It is not because I have no wine,
> And that I might not wander and saunter about.
>
> My mind is not a mirror; ---
> It cannot [equally] receive [all impressions].
> I, indeed, have brothers,
> But I cannot depend on them.
> If I go and complain to them,
> I meet with their anger.
>
> My mind is not a stone; ---
> It cannot be rolled about.
> My mind is not a mat; ---
> It cannot be rolled up.
> My deportment has been dignified and good,
> With nothing wrong which can be pointed out.
>
> My anxious heart is full of trouble;
> I am hated by the herd of mean creatures;

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[34] Eileen Chang, "Lun Xie Zuo" ("On Writing"), in Chang, Chang's Outlook, p. 272. Shi Jing (The Book of Poetry) is a folk song collection composed before the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-7 A.D.); we can only see the words of the songs today.

I meet with many distresses;
I receive insults not a few.
Silently I think of my case,
And, starting as from sleep, I beat my breast.

There are the sun and the moon, ---
How is it that the former has become small and
not the latter?
The sorrow cleaves to my heart,
Like an unwashed dress.
Silently I think of my case,
But I cannot spread my wings and fly away.[37]

Reading this poem carefully, we can easily find the similarity between the poet's and Liu-su's adverse circumstances. Hence, it is clear that the protagonist's predicament is purposely arranged to arouse both the reader's criticism of that society's morbid concept and compassion for women's unfair treatment.

As the author uses "love" in the title, it is obvious that "love" is also an important motif in this story. Generally speaking, it seems that Eileen Chang does not believe there is true love between any couple. If it exists in one, it will either not work out for both sides or simply not last. Examining Miss Chang's stories, one can hardly find a really happy couple. Among all of her works, "Love in the Fallen City" is probably the most delightful one in terms of the fates of the lovers involved. However, in this story we find love includes two definitions: business and genuine love.

Many people don't regard "Love in the Fallen City" as serious literature; instead, they think it is only a story of a love game. If they notice it, they merely remark on the author's technique of depicting Liu-yuan and Liu-su's dialogue of badinage, and seldom do they discuss the meaning of this story. (Even Professor C.T. Hsia, the first critic who affirmed the value of Eileen Chang's writings, only used one paragraph to introduce this work.)[38] Their understanding is hence rather far removed from the reality disguised by the flirting tone in this couple's (Liu-su and Liu-yuan) dialogue. In their "love game," Liu-su and Liu-yuan are both displaying distinctive trading mentalities. Liu-su is trying to purchase the marriage with herself, while Liu-yuan wants to buy her love with the promise of marriage.

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[37] "Pih-chow," in the chapter of Pei Feng in The Book of Poetry, trans. James Legge, in The Chinese Classics, Vol. 4 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), pp. 38-40.

From the very beginning, Liu-su's motive for being intimate with Liu-yuan is to find financial support. Since she is already twenty-eight, still attractive but not a young girl any more, and has no one to depend on, she can not be but extremely careful when she is dealing with Liu-yuan. If she fails, her dignity and her future would also be ended. The night when Liu-yuan accuses her on the phone that "Basically you think marriage is just a long-term prostitution..."(p. 129), he does not spare Liu-su's sensitivity at all; his penetrating remark lays the truth bare. Therefore, although Liu-su is furious because he has insulted her, she says nothing in retort. However, Liu-su is not a person without emotions. When Liu-yuan tells her he loves her, Liu-su feels excited (p. 127); she also admits

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[38] Hsia, A History, p. 414.

Liu-yuan is lovable (p. 138). Nevertheless, being in a position which allows no retreat, how can she develop natural and normal feelings for Liu-yuan?

Liu-yuan's feelings toward Liu-su are also complicated. Although he possesses the fortune that other people dream about, he is rather poor in spirit. He has been forced to live abroad since he was born. After growing up, he finally acquires, with much difficulty, his father's legacy but still cannot win the recognition of his father's clansmen. Having gone through all of those difficulties, Liu-yuan longs for a real love. He does not care for the girls who are sent to his door, but rather he needs someone who can understand him and be his spiritual companion; this is what he asks of Liu-su. He carefully sets up an illusion to trap Liu-su's love. Hence, after he says he loves her, he immediately asks her if she loves him too. This first sentence is but a bait, while the second is his real concern (p. 127). Many readers consider Liu-yuan a playboy, and it is true he does not pay the same for what he asks of Liu-su; however, he still has certain degree of sincerity toward her. Otherwise, when he realizes Liu-su has her own intentions about him, why does he not leave her and look for another woman? Why does he go on with such perseverance? However, his concern for her is not deep enough to be properly regarded as love.

As the narrator criticizes, "he was just a selfish man, and she just a selfish woman"(p. 151), they both have something that they demand of each other, but they will not pay before the other offers what they want. Not until Hong Kong is bombed and the world of the material civilizations is facing a crisis of destruction, can they take off their masks and return to their original selves. It is as Liu-yuan says: "One day when our civilization is completely ruined and everything is destroyed..., maybe then you would be sincere towards me, and maybe I would be sincere towards you"(p. 114). Only in war time when nothing in the external world is dependable, can they develop a genuine affection. This is the second meaning of love in the story.

To stress her ideal of real love, the author makes good use of the minor characters, Ahli and her child. In this story, Ahli's love for her child is significant for two reasons. First of all, it is in contrast to old Mrs. Bai's love for Liu-su, which may even broadly imply the whole Bai family's relationships. Secondly, it enlightens Liu-su on the subject of love which her past environment could not offer her. Hence, when Liu-yuan first comes into her sight in the bombing, she "grasped his hand, and tightly held onto his arm just like Ahli holding onto her child"(p. 144).

As we know from our introduction to Eileen Chang's life and works, she is a pessimist. Her profound pessimism is shown in two respects. The first is that she regards the world we live in as an absurd one (p. 155) because there are no real moral criteria -- the right can be wrong and the wrong can be right -- and there is no justice -- one receives neither reward for good deeds nor punishment for evil behavior. The second is that in addition to precious qualities, she finds there are limitations in our human nature, whether moral, emotional or physical. The tragedy of mankind is that one cannot be the master of one's own self, because "compared to the strength of the outside world, we human beings are so small..."(p. 128). As Liu-su says, although it is painful the first time you encounter bad things and bad people, they are not "a part of you." But, the most lamentable fact is that "...if you mix with them for a long time, how can you distinguish what constitutes them and what constitutes yourself?"(p. 115). With this understanding, we can easily forgive Liu-su's shallowness, Liu-yuan's insincerity, and even the Bais' lack of generous emotion.

Through the real love between Liu-yuan and Liu-su and that of Ahli to her child, we learn that the author recognizes and evaluates much of the noble part of human nature. However, it is hard for the noble nature in human beings to survive for long. Some of Liu-yuan's plans, such as taking Liu-su to the Malaysian jungle to return to nature significantly convey the author's disappointment toward the material world which has often twisted human nature. Therefore, "Love in the Fallen City" does not end with a cliche such as, "the prince and the princess lived happily together." Instead, the epilogue is "from then on, Liu-yuan never joked around with her, he saved his wisecracks to tell other women."(p. 155).

2. Writing Techniques

In "A Dream of Being a Genius," Eileen Chang states, "life is a resplendent robe, covered with bugs."[39] In life, she sees the good and the bad. Since she loves the sublime in life, she cannot help feeling mournful to see the ignoble side of it. This is the aspect of Eileen Chang that people often misunderstand. However, they do notice the magnificent expressions in her literary compositions. To understand Miss Chang as a talented novelist, and to comprehend the significance of her thought as transmitted through the content of her work, we must survey the writing techniques she skillfully employs in those works.

"Love in the Fallen City" is a story presented in linear chronological order. It begins with the family quarrel and continues with Bai Liu-su and Fan Liu-yuan's love story. These two parts of the story are both evoked and linked by the appearances of a crucial character, Mrs. Xu. The first time she appears is when she visits the Bais to pass on the news of Liu-su's ex-husband's death. The second time is when she bids farewell to the Bais and invites Liu-su to go to Hong Kong with her. Since the author's narration directly follows the sequence of the events, the plot of the story is rather easy to pick up in contrast to its use of point of view.

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[39] Chang, Chang's Outlook, p. 279.

Roughly, the use of point-of-view in "Love in the Fallen City" is through the third person "center of consciousness," which Wayne Booth has honored as the most important unacknowledge narrator in modern fiction. [40] The center here is Liu-su, who is also the protagonist of the story. Although in a few places, there is an impersonal narrator, the story is mainly presented through her consciousness: we see what she sees, hear what she hears, and feel what she feels. But, why does the author use Liu-su as the center of consciousness? Obviously, the most important reason is to arouse the sympathy of the reader.

When we discussed the themes of the story in the preceding pages, we learned that Liu-su was portrayed as a pathetic character. Although she has her own shortcomings in the story, she is caught in a dilemma which is not the result of any personal folly on her part. Choosing her to be the center of consciousness shortens the distance between the reader and the heroine, which means the reader can understand what kind of person she really is, how she feels about the things happening to her, and the reasoning behind her actions. Since we always look at things through Liu-su's eyes, we come closer to experiencing everything that happens to Liu-su as if it were happening to ourselves. Therefore, we are sad when Liu-su is sad; we are excited when she is excited. The reader's sympathy for her is easily evoked in this kind of intimate relationship. For example, when we learn that during Liu-su's sister's (Bao-luo) marriage interview, Liu-su and Liu-yuan (who was originally introduced to Bao-luo) have danced several songs while Bao-luo can only sit there doing nothing about it, we, instead of blaming Liu-su for having no consideration for her unmarried sister, feel relieved that Liu-su is still attractive to men. Moreover, in our minds there is aroused a hope that she will soon find someone to marry. On the contrary, for Bao-luo, the victim of Liu-su's inconsideration, we have only some superficial sorrow for a short moment; after that we quickly forget her.

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[40] Wayne C. Booth, The Rethoric of Fiction, 11th edition (1961; rpt. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 153.

While discussing the author's intention to elicit the reader's sympathy for the protagonist, one must not ignore the fact that she does not indulge in her creation and blind the reader's eyes. On the contrary, Miss Chang offers us the chance to find out Liu-su's weaknesses such as her shallowness and narrow-mindedness. Through the same explicit description of Liu-su's inner feelings the author expresses her criticism of Liu-su. In addition, she further uses Liu-yuan to articulate a more severe comment on Liu-su's concept of marriage. Finally, through the narrator's own summary, she reproaches Liu-su as a selfish woman. Having been both sympathetic and critical, the author's portrait of the heroine can be considered as objective.

However, by depicting the story with the point-of-view of a third person "center of consciousness," we may wonder how the author can realistically portray the other important characters, such as the Bais and Fan Liu-yuan. In order to answer this question, it is useful to look at characters of the Bais and Liu-yuan individually.

It is an easier task, although not easy, to describe the Bais, because they are all very much alike and are "flat characters." (That is, their personalities remain the same from the beginning to the end of the story.) What Eileen Chang does here is to adopt the skillful technique of using diaologue to present the reader with all the information about the Bai's characteristics. The main portraits of the Bais are presented in the first part of the story -- the family quarrel. Once the task of establishing the Bais' personalities has been achieved, we find the author expends few words to describe them further. For instance when Liu-su first returns from Hong-Kong, the author gives a summary, through an impersonal narrator's viewpoint, of her disguised criticism of these characters.

If we agree that Eileen Chang's technique of describing the Bais is succinct, then that of portraying Fan Liu-yuan is rather complicated. Liu-yuan and Liu-su are the most important characters of the story, but the author has used an entirely different process to portray them -- while she uses numerous words to describe Liu-su's inner feelings, she declines to do the same for Liu-yuan. Xun Yu has expressed his dissatisfaction with the author about having kept the reader distant from Liu-yuan, and leaving him as an unsolved puzzle throughout the whole story.[41] However, the critic's opinions are rather specious, because, although the reader is kept outside of Liu-yuan's mind most of the time, through other sources we can understand what type of person he is. As for Liu-yuan's background the author employs Mrs. Xu to provide us with the required information, and later confirms it in a dialogue between Liu-yuan and Liu-su.

To present Liu-yuan's personality, instead of giving us direct information (which could be done either by unfolding his inner feelings or by offering a reliable commentary from the narrator), the author supplies us with an indirect series of descriptions of Liu-yuan through the eyes of other characters. For instance, Mrs. Xu tells us that Liu-yuan's temperament is odd because of his unusual childhood, he regards women as mud under his feet, and he indulges himself in gambling dens and whore houses (p. 90). From the Third Madam, we learn that Liu-yuan is not sincere about the marriage interview with Bao-luo (p. 94). From Liu-su, through whom most of the information about Liu-yuan is revealed, we learn that he is prone to telling lies to women (p. 97); he is, after all, inclined toward spiritual love (p. 117); and that he loves Liu-su, but he is a selfish man who does not treat Liu-su with due consideration.

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[41] Tang, The Research, pp. 126-7.

In moulding the character of Liu-yuan, many subjective opinions from other characters in the story have been employed. The subjective opinions, however, form an objective picture of the character, since they have something in common: they show Liu-yuan to be a person who takes nothing seriously. But, reading between the lines, we feel there is something beyond this trait, which is the sincere side of Liu-yuan. In order to bring out the deeper aspects of his character, the author has him present three dynamic speeches which, significantly, not only convey his sincerity, but also reveal one of the most important messages the author wants to stress in the story. The first speech occurs on Liu-su's first night in Hong Kong when Liu-yuan takes her to the bottom of the grey wall (p. 113); Liu-yuan tells Liu-su that only when the civilization is ruined will they be sincere to each other. The second speech occurs in the Shanghainese restaurant when Liu-yuan talks about how he wants to take Liu-su to the jungle in Malaysia (p. 120). The third time is on the phone when Liu-yuan asserts that compared to the strength of the outside world, we human beings are too weak (p. 128).

Originally, the contents of these speeches would have affirmed his sincerity. However, to strengthen the reader's impression, the narrator also adeptly unfolds his inner feelings three times. The first unfolding is set in the same place and same time as the first speech. At that point, Liu-yuan asks Liu-su to understand him, but the narrator says: "Although these were his words, in his heart he had already despaired. Still though he stubbornly begged, I want you to understand me!" (p. 115). The second time is also set side by side with the second speech. When Liu-su misinterprets Liu-yuan's remarks, the narrator says: "Hearing this, Liu-yuan felt dejected" (p. 121); and "He laughed at himself, his voice was hoarse and dry" (p. 121). The third manifestation of his inner feelings occurs after the war when Liu-yuan is on his way downtown with Liu-su. The narrator relates: "Liu-yuan stopped and looked for a moment. He felt terror in that commonness; then, suddenly a shiver ran through him. He said Liu-su, "Now you should believe: till death do us part! How can we be the masters of our own fate?...!" (p. 154). Although this is quite long after the third speech takes place, it reflects the seriousness of Liu-yuan's previous attitude.

In "Love in the Fallen City," the center of consciousness technique is used most of the time; however, Eileen Chang also employs an impersonal narrator to assist her in telling the story. Occasionally, she even uses Liu-yuan an a narrator-agent to give the narrator's opinions. According to the needs of the different events, Eileen Chang deliberately switches the points of view, which not only increases the literary interest in the story, but also shows her dexterity with point-of-view techniques.

However, to understand the artistry of Eileen Chang's writing, it is not enough to study only her use of "point-of-view" techniques; we must also include a study of her uses of imagery and symbolism.

In A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, Professor C.T. Hsia asserts, "With her capacity for sensuous knowledge and comprehensive education, her (Eileen Chang's) fiction should boast the richest imagery of any contemporary Chinese writer."[42] Indeed, besides adopting the attitude that showing better than telling, Eileen Chang utilizes a lot of imagery to deepen the meaning of the words and enrich the external vision of the story. In this story, we find that she not only frequently uses imagery, but she also uses it in various ways. The first usage of imagery in the story is to evoke the reader's sympathy. An obvious example is the paragraph describing Liu-su's illusion:

> Seemingly, it was many years earlier again. She was only about ten years old. After coming out of the theater in a downpour, she had been jostled and separated from her family. She stood alone on the sidewalk, staring at people who also were staring at her through rain-splattered car windows -- layer upon layer of transparent glass -- countless strangers they were. All people were isolated in their own small worlds. Even of she broke her head she could never break into their lives. It was as if she were paralysed. (p. 83)

In this passage, we perceive Liu-su's feeling of isolation, which arouses our sympathy for her, and makes us prepared to accept revolutionary changes in her life.

The second usage of imagery is to convey the author's implied commentary, an example of which we can find in the long paragraph which starts from: "The door closed again, and the main hall remained in the dark," and ends at "This generation is then absorbed into the glorious gold-sprinkled vermillion background, and little by little the sparkling gold becomes the frightened eyes of men gone by" (p. 88). In these remarks, we come across the monotony of Liu-su's life in the home. The horror of losing her lifetime little by little reminds us of the decadent living style in the house and expresses the author's indirect commentary on the Bais.

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[42] Hsia, A History, p. 395.

In the third instance, the author uses imagery as a foreshadowing device. An explicit example is found in the following quotation:

> It wasn't until the boat finally docked that she had the opportunity to finally go on deck to see the ocean. It was a baking-hot afternoon. From what she could see, the most conspicuous thing surrounding the dock area was those huge advertising billboards. The red ones, orange ones, and pink ones were all reflected in the dazzling slick green sea. These brilliant colors sharply contrasted with each other, just like many swords bobbing and fighting violently in the water. (p. 102)

The scene of the reflection in the water shown here elicits an anxious mood in the reader, which foretells that whatliu-su is planning to achieve will be difficult; moreover, it also seems to predict confrontation with the Indian Princess Saheiyini.

The fourth usage, which is also the most popular usage, is to build the mood for coming events. As Cao Shu-juan has noticed, Eileen Chang has frequently used the moon in her stories to suggest some indescribable emotions of the characters.[43] In this story, it is used in the same way; its appearance helps to create a romantic atmosphere. (However, the appearance of the moon does not mean Liu-su and Liu-yuan are both ready for true romance.) For instance, Eileen Chang Writes:

> She turned her face towards him, and whispered, "I understand, I understand." She consoled him, but she couldn't help thinking of her own face in the moonlight...her delicate profile, eyes and eyebrows, the beauty was incredible and yet intangible. She slowly dropped her head. (p. 115)

At the moment, the moon creates in Liu-su a self-consciousness of her own beauty; it also simultaneously evokes a romantic mood.

During the night when Liu-yuan tells Liu-su that he loves her and they later have an argument about their actual relationship, the moon is also in sight:

> The air around her was too quiet, however, and although it was far away from her, she could still hear Liu-yuan's voice calmly saying, "Liu-su, can you see the moon through your window?
> Liu-su didn't know why, but all of a sudden she choked with sobs. The moon in her tearful eyes was big and vague, silver with little green rays. (p. 130)

The moon pictured here relates to Liu-su's frustrated emotions. Therefore, the moon is seen as vague, although big. Because of its success in mood-building, the paragraph is probably one of the most beautiful scenes in the story.

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[43] Cao Shu-juan, "Zhang Ai-ling Xiao Shuo De Ri Yue Yi Xiang" ("The Images of Sun and Moon in Eileen Chang's Fiction"), in Zhang Ai-ling De Xiao Shuo Shi Jie (The World of Eilleen Chang's Fiction), ed. Zhang Jian (Taipei: Student's Bookstore, 1984), pp. 137-66.

Since the imagery of the moon is closely related to the romantic mood of the characters in "Love in the Fallen City," the moon, as expected, is presented during the night of Liu-yuan and Liu-su's first kiss. However, Liu-su's falling into Liu-yuan's arms at that time is because she has no alternative; the moon seen here is quite different from the previous one:

> The slender, late November moon was a white hook, like frost on the window. However there was still a bit of moonlight which shone on the sea, and reflected through the window onto the mirror, brightening it. (p.136)

In addition to the imagery of the moon, we also find other kinds of mood-building imagery in the story, such as the following:

> ...as soon as it was dark in this dead city with no lights and no human sounds, only the cold, fierce wind blew its three different notes: "Woo...Hoo...Ooo...," it cried endlessly. ...the three tones were like three parallel gray dragons. They flew forward in a straight line; their bodies extending so far that one couldn't see their tails. "Woo... Hoo...Ooo...," it cried until it ran out of dragons. But there was a stream of illusion which seemed to be an illusory bridge leading into darkness, into an empty void. (p. 150)

Reading this paragraph, one will be able to sense the mood of desolation that the characters experience in the story, which points the way to their deeper feelings of insecurity and distraction.

Like imagery, symbolism is also used frequently and significantly in Eileen Chang's stories. The symbols adopted in the story can be categorized into three groups: those concerning people, plants and inanimate objects.

In the first category, I will use Princess Saheiyini as an example. The princess, although seemingly not crucial in the plot of the story, is thematically important as a contrast to Liu-su. From the previous discussion, we realize that Liu-yuan as a person has two faces: a superficial one and a serious one. In his relationships with women, there are also two aspects, the physical and the spiritual. When we characterize his relationships, we find Saheiyini will be put in the range of the former category, while Liu-su fits into the latter. In order to heighten our understanding of Saheiyini, we must take a closer look at how her character is portrayed.

In the story, the princess appears four times. The first is when Liu-su arrives at the Repulse Bay Hotel. Saheiyini is standing on the balcony, talking with Liu-yuan. Through Liu-su's eyes, the reader can only see the image of her back, which creates an air of mystery; as well, it evokes the reader's curiosity about her and her relationship with Liu-yuan. The second time we see her is when Liu-yuan takes Liu-su out of the Hong Kong Hotel, and meets Saheiyini being accompanied by many foreign gentlemen. Her popularity among men implies her casual relationships with them. Hence, Liu-yuan, being around her, is also morally questionable. More importantly, at this stage, there are more detailed description of her appearance. The most significant is that "Her face was yellowish and shiny, like a gold-plated Goddess of Mercy, but her deep, black eyes seemed to have the Devil in them" (p. 110). The soul of the devil is diguised under the Goddess mask, which answers the question as to what type of person she is.

As Shui Jing points out in his The Art of Eileen Chang's Fiction, Liu-su's family name "Bai" literally means "white," while the second syllable of the princess's name "hei" means "black."[44] As white is the opposite of black, Liu-su and Saheiyini are presented as opposed to each other in their natures, as well as in their relationships with Liu-yuan.

The third time when Saheiyini shows up is after Liu-su has been in conflict with Liu-yuan. If Liu-su is right about Liu-yuan, that he is searching for spiritual love from her, then, when Liu-yuan turns toward Saheiyini, it could mean that he is having some problems satisfying his spiritual needs and is taking a break by enjoying a superficial love affair with Saheiyini. The last time we see the princess is after the war when Liu-yuan and Liu-su have established a firm relationship. The princess looks miserable in every sense. This is especially significant since it means that the sexual promiscuity she symbolizes does not interest Liu-yuan. Furthermore it implies Liu-su's complete victory over her.

In addition to the human symbols, there is plant symbolism as in the example of the "wild fire flower." Like

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[44] Shui Jing, "Shi Lun Zhang Ai-ling 'Qing Chang Zhi Lian' Zhong De Shen Hua Jie Gou" ("The Mythical Structure of Eileen Chang's 'Love in the Fallen City'"), in Shui Jing, The Art, p. 49.

Sahieyini, "wild fire flower" consistently symbolizes an object which is passionate. The first time the "wild fire flower" is introduced into the story by Liu-yuan during his romantic night walk with Liu-su. Liu-su asks Liu-yuan if it is red. He says "red." And the writer remarks: "In the dark of the night, she couldn't see the redness, but instinctively, she knew it was as red as could be -- an uncontrollable red" (p. 113). In these remarks, the "uncontrollable" actually refers to the passion that Liu-su and Liu-yuan feel toward each other. However, the idea is not explicit until it is mentioned again in the instance when Liu-yuan kisses Liu-su for the first time. The author writes: "This was the first time he had kissed her....They seemed to fall into a mirror, into a dark world which was hot and cold at the same time, a world with wild sparks [wild fire flower in the original text Eileen Chang used a term which includes the two meanings? that consumed their bodies" (p. 137). Normally, in Chinese literature, passion is depicted in an implicit way, since passion or sex is almost taboo in serious literature. The symbol of "wild fire flower" does not only successfully transmit the idea, but also deepens the meaning of the whole scene.

The third group of symbols employed in the story is inanimate; Chang uses this type of symbols widely throughout the novelette. For example, the material glass represents an invisible estrangement between each two individuals, as in Liu-su's allusion to her childhood experience (p. 83). The defective clocks signify the conceptual anachronism of the Bai family. They are mentioned twice in the story: Once in the narrator's introduction of the Bais at the opening of the story, the other time in Liu-su's introspective about her life in the Bai's home (p. 87). Finally, we come to the most important inanimate symbol -- the gray wall standing nearby Repulse Bay Hotel. When Liu-yuan tells Liu-su that the wall reminds him of ageless testaments of love, he already indicates that the wall symbolizes true love, the author's ideal love. Since, in our common beliefs, true love is one of the very few things that endures, the wall, as the symbol of true love, will also last. We not only hear Liu-yuan say, "One day when our civilization is completely ruined and everything is destroyed -- burned, bombed or collapsing, perhaps the only thing remaining will be this wall" (p. 114); we also read that Liu-su, although sitting in bed at home, believes that the gray wall is still standing there even after the bombing (p. 151).

3. The Influences on Eileen Chang's Writings.

After examining the themes and the techniques presented by the story, I cannot avoid thinking of the difficulty of studying Eileen Chang's works, although knowing that the study of such a unique writer is a great pleasure. The difficulty arises mainly from the lack of information about Miss Chang and the background of her works. Though Miss Chang has been well known since the 1940's, there is very little documentation about her life and works that has been published. The most important contributions are probably her own books, Liu Yan (Gossips) and Zhang Kan (Chang's Outlooks). In these two essay collections, we, however, find only a description of her rather early life up till she graduated from middle school. Moreover, the information is far from being called "detailed." Besides these two books, there are only some articles, including interviews, essays on Eileen Chang from personal viewpoints, most of which have been collected in the books that Tang Wen Biao has edited. Although some of this data is useful, the bigger part is just fragments.

The reasons for the lack of information about Miss Chang are two. The first is that there were not many people who studied her works during her prolific period of prolificacy. (As we learned at the beginning of this introduction, the serious critics of her time thought she could only write romantic stories; therefore, they paid little attention to her.) The second reason is that Eileen Chang is a person of idiosyncratic disposition. Once she wrote that she was dull-witted in dealing with people, but when there were no others around, she felt life was full of delight.[45] Miss Chang has always been quiet to the public eye and has revealed little information about herself. Moreover, she takes privacy seriously. From Hu Lan-cheng's and Shui Jing's reports of their personal experiences interviewing Miss Chang, we learn that she would not accept interviews easily, and even if she consented to one, it does not mean she would answer all the questions.[46] According to the record of a meeting on July 21, 1945, when Mr. Chen Shan-he asked about her concept of love, Eileen Chang replied: "Even if I had any idea, do you think I would tell you so easily? In addition, I am a professional writer, and have always grudged ink as if it were gold. Would it not be a shame if I were to let it flow casually?"[47] From this we can see that it is hard to obtain any information directly from her, and research on her work is made difficult because of it.

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[45] Tang, On Eileen Chang, p. 139.

Influence study is very important in understanding a particular writer and his works. However, it is rather difficult in the study of Eileen Chang because of the problems we have just discussed. Nevertheless, from all the information available, one can infer that the influences on Eileen Chang's writing are mainly from three sources: her family life, Western literature in general, and the Chinese classics.

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[46] Shui Jing, "Xun Zhang Ai-ling Bu Yu" ("TheFailure of Visiting Eileen Chang"), in Shui Jing, The Art, pp. 11-5, and Tang, On Eileen Chang, p. 124.

[47] "Na Liang Hui Ji" (The Minutes of the Forum of "Enjoying the Cool"), in Tang, The Collection, p. 293.

As biographical scholars believe, a writer's early experiences usually have a certain influence on his later works. Knowing how tragic Miss Chang's relationship with her family was we should not be surprised in reading of Liu-su's breakup with her own family in "Love in the Fallen City." Naturally, it is ridiculous if one thinks that Eileen Chang would identify herself completely with Bai Liu-su; nevertheless, the conflict within Bai's family relationship reminds one that within the author's own, since family conflicts are unusual both in Chinese Literature and in real life. Besides, Eileen Chang once remarked that she always kept writing materials in her mind for ten or twenty years before she could put them on paper. Therefore, "Love in the Fallen City," written in 1943, could easily be the reflection of some of her previous experiences, although we cannot say this about her life at 12 years old or earlier.

Turning to the subject of influence from Western literature, we must review Eileen Chang's education background in order to have a clear idea about how this Chinese writer has been influenced. Besides classic Chinese, piano and painting, Eileen Chang also began her English lessons at the very young age of nine.[48] Later, she entered St. Maria Girl's Middle School in Shanghai, which was supported by the protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.[49] According to Mr. Wang Hong-sheng, a former teacher in the school, the authorities at the school stressed English curricula more than Chinese curricula.[50] One year after graduating from middle school, Eileen Chang entered the University of Hong Kong. Although we don't know what she majored in, we do know that she claims to have used only English in her writings, including practice letters, during her three years in university. We learn that she must have had very close contact with English. From her educational background, it is doubtless that Eileen Chang had many chances to study Western literature. Furthermore, she admitted that she liked the stories of Stella Benson, S. Maugham, A. Huxley, modern Western plays [51] and English popular literature.[52] In addition, she claimed she was also aware of Chekhov,[53] Tolstoy,[54] H.G. Wells,[55] Kafka,[56] Joyce,[57] Brecht,[58] Pinter, [59] and so on. However among all these names, Miss Chang has never seriously discussed any one of them, and she has never commented on any Western literary writing techniques. Therefore, to trace who or which works have influenced her writings is just like searching for a needle in a haystack.

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[48] Tang, *On Eileen Chang*, p. 139.
[49] Tang, *The Collection*, p. 253.

However, she did once mention the techniques of depicting a character's psychology and stream of consciousness. She asserts that in classic Chinese fiction one cannot only perceive a character's dialogue and actions, but there is also description of the character's inner life. Regardless of whether this statement is true or not, it reveals that she is aware of the importance of techniques for depicting thoughts and mental processes such as those we find so frequently and skillfully created in "Love in the Fallen City" as well as in her other stories. Besides describing characters' psychological phenomena, Eileen Chang is also dexterous in using different techniques of point-of-view, imagery and symbols which have been seen more in Western literature than in traditional Chinese literature. In these respects, Eileen Chang is undoubtedly indebted to Western literature.

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[50] Tang, The Collection, p. 253.
[51] Shui Jing, The Art, p. 28.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Chang, Gossips, p. 14.
[54] Ibid., pp. 22-3.
[55] Shui Jing, The Art, p. 28.
[56] Shui Jing, "Yie Fang Zhang Ai-ling Bu Yi" ("The Supplement of 'Cicada'"), in Shui Jing, The Art, pp. 34-5.
[57] Eileen Chang, "Tan Kan Shu" ("About Reading"), in Chang, Chang's Outlook, p. 225.
[58] Shui Jing, The Art, pp.34-5.
[59] Ibid.

As for influences from classical Chinese literature, we know that Eileen Chang first encountered the Chinese classics at the extremely young age of seven, or eight. (Although she learned English at nine, her studies of Western literature probably didn't begin until middle school or in university). In addition, she has several times expressed her admiration of some books such as *Jin Ping Mei* (*The Golden Lotus*)[60], *Xing Shi Yin Yuan Zhuan* (*Marriage as Retribution*)[61], *Hai Shang Hua Lie Zhua* (*Sing-song Girls in Shanghai*)[62], *Xie Pu Chao*[63] and *Hong Lou Mong* (*Dream of the*

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[60] Shui Jing, *The Art*, p. 30.

[61] Eileen Chang, "Ji Hu Shi Zhi" ("Recall Dr. Hu Shih"), in Chang *Chang's Outlook*, p.167.

[62] Shui Jing, *The Art*, p. 23; and Chang, *Chang's Outlook*, p. 167.

[63] Shui Jing, *The Art*, pp. 20-1.

Red Chamber)[44]. The explanation of why Miss Chang likes these Chinese classics lies not only in the particular value of each book, but also her personal preference for the traditional writing style. In "About Reading," she writes, "Since small, I have adopted the habit of reading voraciously. Most of the books I read are sociological novels, because they retain the traditional stories' style and form which makes me feel cozy..."[45] While we suspect that Eileen Chang has been imperceptibly affected by Western literature, it is clear that she has "sought" influence from classical Chinese literature. This influence on Miss Chang's writing is evident in four aspects: language, the physical descriptions of characters, settings and objects, and the portrayal of characters.

In the area of language, Eileen Chang inclines to use classical vocabulary. For instance, "to say," she uses "dao" instead of "shuo"; for "chin," she uses "xia han" instead of "xia ba"; for "unrewarded virtues," she uses "yin zhi" instead of "yin de"; for "to arrange (a banquet)," she says "zhi," but not "ban" or "an pai"; for "to lift up (the glass)," she uses "qing" not "na" or "ju"; for the phrase "having no way to defend oneself," she says "bai hui mo bian," not "bai kou mo bian"; for "to turn away," she does not simply write "zhuan shen," but adds "buo" in front of "Zhuan shen"; others examples abound. This writing style gives the reader a strong impression that her stories are rather classical.

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[44] Shui Jing, The Art, pp. 20-1.
[45] Chang, Chang's Outlook, p. 214.

As for physical description of characters, settings and objects, Eileen Chang has inherited the skills demonstrated in colorful and detailed traditional novels. Such influence is detectable in description of the princess's appearance each time she appears, Liu-su's reflection in the mirror, the Bais' parlour and Liu-su's umbrella. In discussing Eileen Chang's writing techniques, Professor Hsia has also pointed out that "the author's [Miss Chang] visual imagination, which rises on occasion to a keatsian opulance, is always impressive in the detailed description of the clothes of her female characters. Very possibly nothing like this intimate boudoir realism has appeared in Chinese fiction since the great novel Dream in the Red Chamber.‘‘ Although Prof. Hsia only mentions the description of the female characters' appearance and no reference to the fact that Chinese classics, such as Dream of the Red Chamber, exerted an influence on Eileen Chang's physical descriptions of characters, settings and objects, the similarities between the techniques in Chang's works and in the Chinese classics are in this regard impossible to be taken as purely coincidental, especially since she has studied the classics very well.

In contrast to the importance placed on the plot (or "the structure of the incidents" as Aristotle calls it) in traditional Western fiction, the philosophy of a story is

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‘‘Hsia, A History, p. 396.

given much greater emphasis in traditional Chinese fiction. Hence, while in Western fiction there is more action, in Chinese narratives there is more dialogue; the advantage is that when dialogue is transmitting a person's thought, it also is presenting his character in a direct way. In analysing the portrait of the Bais' personalities, we have shown that the author skillfully adopts dialogues to focus their image. Besides the Bais, the other characters in "Love in the Fallen City" such as Liu-su, Liu-yuan and Mrs. Xu are also moulded into what they are through their dialogues. Although the story is basically developed through the description of Liu-su's inner feelings, if one removes any of the dialogue, the reader's knowledge of the speaker or listener can easily be impaired; furthermore, some important message from the invisible author may also not be conveyed. Conclusively, the reason that the simple-plotted "Love in the Fallen City" is successful is mainly derived from the author's technique of using dialogue, which she has learned from the Chinese classics.

Before we finish discussing the Chinese classics' influence on Eileen Chang, I must suggest one more idea, which is that Dream of the Red Chamber may be one of the most influential classics on Eileen Chang. Acording to Miss Chang's own remarks, she first read this book when she was eight; since then, she has reread it every three or four years.[67] Once in an interview, she further admitted that she had occasionally imitated its syntax to create an archaic atmosphere.[66] In "Love in the Fallen City," there are at least two explicit examples of this. The first one is "You put a curse on these boys without any reason"(p. 79). The original sentence is "赤口白舌的咒起孩子来了!" (to curse the boys with red lips and white tongue") which evolved from "豈有紅口白舌咒人死的?" (literally: How [could I] curse others to die with red lips and white tongue?") in Chapter ninety-eight of _Dream of the Red Chamber_. The second example is "Heartless idiot!" (p. 96). The original sentence is "豬油蒙了心 !" (literally: "[Your] heart is covered by lard!") which as also evolved from a sentence in the same book, Chapter 26," 糊塗油蒙了心!" (the literal meaning of which is "[Your] heart is covered by the confusing oil!") With these two examples, we definitely can say that _"Dream of the Red Chamber_, or even more broadly, the Chinese classics have significantly influenced Eileen Chang's writing.

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[67] Chang, Chang's Outlook, p. 396.

After this quick look at the relationchip of Miss Chang's works to Chinese classics and Western literature, one can see which aspects Miss Chang's writing should be good in. In "Love in the Fallen City," we enjoy a splendid display of her intrinsic talents and the fruit of her literary pursuits; more significantly, we find that Miss Chang offers us a good example of literature which is affected by different cultures, and that writing skills of different origins can and have been employed on the same work simultaneously to heighten the work's artistic attainment. For all of these, though I cannot say Eileen Chang is "the best and most important writer in Chinese writer today,"[‘’] definitely, she is one of the best and most important writers in the history of modern Chinese literature.

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[66] Tang, _On Eileen Chang_, p. 228.

[‘’] Hsia, A History, p. 389.

C. Translator's Note

"The purist" as Maynard Mack says in "A Note on Translation," "may insist that we ought always read the original language...";[70] however, translation has been one of the major media of communication for centuries. Literary translation is especially significant, because it not only introduces one culture to another, but also helps those who read in one language to comprehend the quality of a writer who writes in another language. With this understanding of the value of translation, I was excited to do the translation of Eileen Chang's "Love in the Fallen City." However, no matter how a translator appreciates the original author and his work, it cannot lessen the problems he encounters in the translating process.

In my translating "Love in the Fallen City," there were a few problem areas. Although it is hard for me to approve completely of Theodore Savory's assertion that "the translator's task is much harder than that of the original author,"[71] I certainly agree with Frederick C. Tsai that the translator sometimes need luck to accomplish his work.[72] I met problems in many aspects of this translation, including phonetic, lexical, discourse structure and cultural. In the following explanation of the problems, I will include the methods I used to solve them. Hopefully, if the solutions are not the best, the methods used to derive them are at least of reference value.

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[70] Maynard Mack, "A Note on Translation," in *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*, ed. Maynard Mack et al (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1956), p. 1871.

[71] Theodore Savory, *The Art of Translation* (Boston: The Writer Inc., 1968), p.26. (From this point on, when *The Art of Translation* is referred to, the abbreviation, Savory, *The Art*, will be used to designate it.)

[72] Frederick C. Tsai, "The Name and Nature of Translation," in *Renditions*, No. 10(Autumn 1978), p. 120.

1. Phonetic Problems

Since Chinese is an entirely different language from English, the pronounciation of proper names or the exclamation expressing a person's mood can be strange and meaningless to an English speaker. In "Love in the Fallen City," there are several names and numerous exclamations which are formed in the profound Chinese way. Basically I transcribed proper names according to their Chinese pronounciation using mainland China's official "Pin-yin" spelling system; however, there were some exceptions. To give a more detailed explanation, we must discuss the treatment of names, and sounds and exclamation separately.

i. Names:

In the story proper names are translated in four ways: according to their standard Mandarin pronounciation, their Cantonese pronountiation, their already well-known English name and their meaning.

The first method, transcribing the Mandarin pronounciation, is commonly used in the translation for such places in China like Shanghai, Guangzhou and most of the characters' names like Bai Liu-su, Fan Liy-yuan, Bao-luo, Jin-zhi, Jin-chan, Mrs. Xu and so on.

As for hotels, restaurants and geographical names in Hong Kong, I chose to use their already known English names since Hong Kong is an international city and using English names which have been familiar to the Western world could help Western readers identify them. Examples are: Repulse Bay Hotel, the Glouchester Restaurant, Repulse Bay, Happy Valley, Kowloon and Hong Kong. Peking and Canton, although not in the district of Hong Kong, are treated in the same way because they are also widely used names in the West.

However, for those places which exist but are only known by the Chinese residents of Hong Kong or those which may not exist but were created by the author as if they existed in Hong Kong, they are transcribed according to their Cantonese pronunciations. Examples are Szeho Inn, Psing-yi Island and Barbington Street. As for the name of Liu-su's servant Ahli, I treated it also in this way because she is Cantonese and her name must be pronounced in the way that the Cantonese would call her.

The last method, translating the meaning of names, is used to treat those names whose meaning are more recognizable than their pronounciations, such as the Green Bird Coffee Shop and the "wild fire flower." (The names of the Bai's family, or more properly, the titles of the Bai's family members should also be listed here; but, since they are involved in a more complicated cultural problem, they will be explained later in this section.)

ii. Sounds and Exclamations:

As we learned in the previous chapter, Eileen Chang is a person who has a strong sensibility of colour and sound. This characteristic is not only shown in her interest in many form of art but also in her writings. In the story, besides the colors of the objects and settings, she also employs numerous words to name sounds and exclamations. Recognizing that Chinese and English are two languages which "sound" completely different, it is rather difficult to find the equivalent for some of the "Chinese sounds" in the English language. These difficulties can be divided into two categories: the problem of translating exclamations and the problem of translating onomatopoeia.

In translating exclamations, it is usually preferred to use the equivalent or similar exclamations in English, such as "hey" on page 91 and 129, "oh" on page 109, "tsk" on page 108 and "pooh" on page 153. However, there were two exclamations which could not be translated. In this situation, I revised the sentences a little in order to render the meaning carried by the original exclamation. The first case is "But look, what a smart fellow he is!"(p. 91). The literal translation of the original sentence is "But the person much smart ya." The usage of the "ya" exclamation here is to strengthen the speaker's tone. The second case is "'What?' Jin-zhi questioned in surprise, 'Who did he dance with?'" (p. 96). The literal translation of the original sentence is "Jin-zhi made a yi sound asking 'He with whom danced?'." The "yi" exclamation expresses the surprise and a questioning attitude the speaker has. Since the two exclamations are expressions peculiar to the Chinese language, I felt justified in altering the sentences.

In regard to the translation of onomatopoeia, it is much more complicated than that of exclamations because onomatopoeia functions in different ways in different languages, and it may exist in one language but not in the other. In Chinese, most onomatopoeia functions as adverbs usually put in front of verbs to describe the sounds caused by the actions. In English, onomatopoeia usually functions as a verb, sometimes it can also be a noun or an adjective, and occasionally it is used as an adverb. Therefore, to translate those Chinese adverb-functionned onomatopoeia, there are four solutions. The first , and most common solution, is to employ an English verb-function onomatopoeia. There are many examples, such as "tittered" on pages 82 and 107, "chuckle" on page 116, and "slapped" on page 123. The second solution is the use of a noun-function onomatopoeia such as "a loud creak" on page 86, "the hisses and cracks" on page 144. The third method is to employ an adjective-function onomatopoeia such as "the splashing sound" on page 124. The fouth method is to maintain the original function of those onomatopoeia, the function of adverb. Examples are "squeakily played" on page 74, and "fell tinkling" on page 136.

In addition to the adverb-function onomatopoeias, there is another group of words which mean nothing but the sounds themselves, such as the sound of wind, the sound of a bomb and the sound of a telephone ring. Translating them is not difficult since they are real sounds which always sound the same wherever they occur. However, gathering a number of letters to make a word in English sound exactly the same as the sound written in Chinese is difficult because the phonetic systems are not exactly equivalent. Therefore, we have to spell the sound according to the way that English speakers are used to seeing it. That is why the translation of sounds though generally close to the original sound, may have been partly changed. For instance, the telephone's sound is "de ling ling" in the original, but has been changed into "ring ring" in the translation (p. 129); "bong bong bong" became "bang bang bang" (p. 143); "zi zi zi" was "Bzzz" (p. 142); "jiu re re re" was revised as "rrr" (p. 142), and so on.

2. Lexical Problems

The lexical problems I encountered in the translation of "Love in the Fallen City" were mainly of two kinds: the translation of common sayings, the translation of idioms which included the translation of idiomatic structure and implicit expressions.

i. Common sayings:

In translating a common saying, the best method is to find its equivalence in the language that one translates into. However, this is just an ideal which may not be achieved every time. In the original, there is no single common saying which can be replaced by an English common saying. Hence, I found the question whether to give a literal translation or the meaning. I felt obligated to achieve both , but when it was impossible, I choose the latter. For example, "there's not a banquet in the world that doesn't have an ending"(p. 81), and "No matter how towering a tree is, its leaves always fall to return to its roots" (p. 77); these two metaphorical sayings are translated directly from Chinese. I was lucky to be able to preserve their original forms and at the same time convey their meanings; however, I was not lucky all the way through. On page 118, there is a common saying "going for wool and coming back fleeced." If we translated this sentence dirctly from Chinese, it would be "trying to steal a chicken only to end up loosing the rice," which would be rather unclear to an English reader; therefore, the expression had to be suitably revised. A second example shows even more how difficult giving a literal translation can be. The original wordage of "How do I know what's going on inside you?," on page 121, is "I am not a roundworm in your belly," which sounds disgusting in English. However, there is no figurative expression which can render its meaning; so the best method is to translate the thought plainly.

ii. Idiomatic Expressions:

Like common sayings, idiomatic expresssions are the product of cultural circumstances. As Savory says, they "do nothing to make the work of the translator easier."[73] Ideally the translator should keep the literal form as well as the meaning of the idiom in the receptor language she translates into. In the story, one of the very rare places that this was achieved is "beating a retreat" on page 154. In most cases, either a little revision or an complete change is needed since English equivalents of Chinese idiomatic expressions are too hard to find. An example of a slightly changed idiom is "laugh their heads off" (p. 76), whose original is "laugh their teeth off." In this example, one word has been changed; however, the most commonly used method, also the least desirable but inevitably used in some cases, is to change the form entirely in order to convey the meaning. Examples of the use of this method are "suspicious" (p. 77), "making a clean break" (p. 79), and "heartless idiot" (p. 96), whose original expressions, "many hearts," "one knife two halves" and "lard covers the heart," are definitely unintelligible to a Western reader.

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[73] Savory, The Art, p. 17.

Besides these idioms we see above, there were two other idiomatic problems we met in the translation. The first one was a problem of idiomatic structure; more concretely, it was a problem of repetition. Reading the original version of "Love in the Fallen City," one can easily discover that there are many repeated expressions formed by using the same words twice or synonymous expressions. This is not a flaw in the author's writing; instead, it is another characteristic of the Chinese language. Facing this kind of problem, the translator has to decide whether or not the repetitions should be translated. In some situations, repetition can strengthen the power of the writing, while sometimes it may spoil the whole work. Even if the translator chooses to translate a certain repetitious expression, he also has to wonder how he is going to translate it. In my work, I treat all the repetitious expressions in three ways: repeating the same word twice, adopting synonymous expressions, and deleting part of them. The first method, to render the repetition by repeating the same expression twice, is seen in the examples as "staggered up the stairs, up the stairs..." (p. 88), "I want you to understand me, I want you to understand me!" (p. 115), and " we human beings are so small, so small!" (p. 128). The second method, to render the repetition with synonymous expressions, can be found in the examples such as "I won't say any more, no more!" (p. 154), and two similar common sayings written side by side, "Alive, you are a member of their family; dead, you are their ghost" and "no matter how towering a tree is, its leaves always fall to return to its roots"(p. 77). The third solution, to delete one of the two similar expressions, is employed in the following examples: On page 92, "everyone was busy cackling and flying about; were overturning and horses were capsizing" becomes "everyone was busy cackling and flying about;" on page 154, "the Xus had considered only their own welfare and had taken refuge in a safe area without caring a bit if she had lived or died" becomes "the Xus had taken refuge in a safe area only considering themselves without caring a bit if she had lived or died."

In regard to the translation of implicit expressions in the story, in "An Experiment in Translation," Gerald Bullet quoted T'sui Chi's statement, "...all Chinese poems are as much 'condensed' in spirit and meaning as in form..."[74] This "condensed" style is not only seen in Chinese poems but also in any other genre of Chinese literature. Mr. Bullet asserted that this writing style comes from the admiration for the idea that "the idea exists beyond words," and cannot be paraphrased in another language.[75] Therefore, in translating this kind of implicit expression, the translator has to "amplify" it.[76] In translating "Love in the Fallen City," there were several examples which fit in Bullet's theory perfectly. Below, I will record the sentences which have been "amplified" in the translation and I will also underline the parts which are present in the original text.

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[74] Quotation from Gerald Bullet's "An Experiment in Translation," in Renditions, No. 4(Spring 1975), p. 41.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

> "But even these bad times, I had to take all that into consideration" (p. 82).
>
> "In her imagination, her mother began to smile silently, but without any emotion" (p. 83).
>
> "When Liu-yuan asked, Liu-su told him that her room number was one thirty (the original has 'and knew' instead of 'Liu-su told him that')" (p. 105).

If we move the underlined words away, the sentences will be either unclear, or awkward, or even confusing to the reader of the translation. However, besides inserting extra information, an additional solution is necessary for translating some implicit expressions, which is to explicate the implication. For instance, "windows' eyes" has to be translated as "holes of the windows" (p. 140); "poor yilao" was rendered as "an official family whose fortune have been going downhill" (p. 112). (In the second example, "Yilao" can be the official of the preceding emperor or of the preceding dynasty. Since the social and economic gap between officials and common people was great in China, the concept of "poor" had to be explicitly defined.)

3. Discourse Structural Problems

Among all the problems I encountered in the translating work, discourse structural problems were the simplest ones to solve because they only required some adjustment.

Generally, I have followed the original form of the content except for dialogue passages. In English fiction, each character's dialogue is customarily separated as one paragraph, which is not necessary in Chinese writing. Since this story is translated into English, it has been presented according to English writing style. Because examples can be seen on almost every page, there is no need to cite any here.

4. Cultural Problems

My goal in this regard was to help Western readers understand the Chinese customs revealed in the story. This understanding is crucial because it can help the reader grasp the meaning of the character's speech, actions and sometimes even the philosophy of the story.

To translate those words carrying special cultural meanings is usually troublesome. In Toward A Science of Translation, Eugene Nida explains that one of the functions of the footnote is to explain different customs.[77] This was commonly done in my actual translation work, when I employed footnotes to explain cultural differences. One example is with the translation of the Bais' individual titles; another explains why the Bais felt that adopting a son could help

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[77] Eugene A. Nida, Toward a Science of Translation (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), p. 238.

Liu-su to gain a living; on page 150 there is one to explain what "hometown flavor" really means.

In addition to the adoption of footnotes, there are other methods to facilitate the understanding of another culture in translation. The first method is to render the culture-colored term in the translation of the story. In doing so, one may have to use several words to replace one word, but it may help the thought of the lines to flow smoothly. For example, "ben-sang" is translated as "to attend the funeral as a member of their family" (p. 76); which is much more significant than simply being translated as "attending the funeral." On page 90, when the Bais are saying Liu-yuan may look down upon Bao-luo because of her background, they say, "Seventh sister was not the child of the first wife." Originally "not the child of the first wife" can also be translated as "illegitimate"; however, "illegitimate," though more literary, is still ambiguous. The second possibility is to find the equivalent of a cultural term in the receptor language. If there is one, this is the best solution to this type of problem. In the story, there is one term, "gan-niang" which means a lady whose position is roughly equivalent to a foster mother or godmother in Western countries without the religious or legal complications. To translate this term with "godmother" may be very close to having an ideal equivalent.

In conclusion, translation is both challenging and tedious work. The translator has to overcome inherent phonetic, lexical, structural and cultural problems in order to transmit faithfully the contents and form of the original effect of the translation.

These kind of demands naturally create many difficult choices for the translator, and often one effect is sacrificed for the sake of another. In face of these difficulties I have tried to be faithful to the original; however, even this poses problems. As Savory says in The Art of Translation, "...it is the duty of a translator to be faithful to his original... he must have clearly in mind what faithfulness implies and in what faithfulness consists."[78] For centuries, critics have argued whether the translator should be faithful to content, form, or aesthetic appeal. The ideal translation is one which maintains all of these; however, when this is impossible, I have made preservation of content my highest priority because "comprehensibility is...of prime importance."[79]

Whereas these have been difficulties, my research has generally been pleasurable. My choice of translating "Love in the Fallen City" naturally reflects my personal reading interest. I believe my motive to introduce to the Western world the exquisite art of Eileen Chang is a noble one. Hopefully others may find value in my work and be stimulated to further research her works.

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[78] Savory, The Art, p. 51.

[79] Yen Fu, "General Remarks on Translation," trans. C.Y. Hsu. in Renditions, No. 1(Autumn 1973), p. 4.

II. "LOVE IN THE FALLEN CITY"

By

Eileen Chang

Translated by

Shu-ning Sciban

To save daylight, the people of Shanghai all turned their clocks one hour ahead. However, the Bais said, "We use the old time." Therefore, what was ten o'clock to them was eleven to others. It was as if the family sang out of tune with the melody of life.

A huqin was squeakily playing in a night full of a myriad of twinkling lights. Its melody busily ran up and down the scale telling such an endless and sorrowful story that it's better not to ask about it!...The stories told by a huqin should be performed by a gorgeously dressed actress whose delicate nose narrows between two long rouged cheeks. She sings, she smiles and she covers her mouth with a sleeve...but, actually there was only the Bai's Fourth Master[**] sitting on the gloomy, dilapidated balcony by himself, playing the huqin.

While he played, the downstairs doorbell rang. It was uncommon that this should happen in the Bai's house. Following an old custom, the Bais never went out to visit friends in the evening. If they had visitors at night, or by chance received a telegram, it meant there must be a dire

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[**] In traditional Chinese society, members of a family don't usually call one another by their first name as Westerners do; instead, they call one another according to their relationship with that person or the seniority of a son or daughter in the family. In our story, for example, there are "Fourth Brother," Sixth Sister," "Seventh Sister" and Fourth Sister-in-law." However male outsiders are always called "Master," women "Miss," and men's wives "Madam." Hence, we also see "Third Master," "Third Madam" and "Seventh Miss" as terms of address. In the story, "Third Master" is "Third Brother"; "Fourth Madam" is "Fourth Sister-in-law," and "Fourth Master's Wife"; Bai Liu-su, is also known as "Sixth Sister," "Sixth Miss" and "Sixth Aunt" according to whom she is called by.

emergency. In most cases, it meant that someone had just died.

The Bai's Fourth Master listened without moving, and, as expected, he heard Third Master, Third Madam and Fourth Madam making a big fuss as they climbed up the stairs, but they spoke so fast that he couldn't understand what they were talking about. In the main room which faced the balcony, sat Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Misses and the children of Third and Fourth Masters. They were all in a state of anxiety. Seated in the darkness on the balcony, Fourth Master could clearly see everything that was happening in the lighted room. All of a sudden, he saw the door open, and Third Master, who was wearing an undershirt and a pair of shorts, entered. He stood in the doorway with his legs spread widely. As he put his hands behind to slap the mosquitos buzzing around his thighs, he called from a distance, "Fourth Eldest, guess what? Sixth Sister's ex-husband has died of pneumonia!"

Fourth Master put down the _huqin_, and walked into the room. He asked, "Who brought over the message?"

Third Master replied, "Mrs. Xu." Saying this, he turned his head back, waved the fan as if to drive Third Madam away and yelled at her, "And don't you come to give us any more trouble! Mrs. Xu is still downstairs. She is overweight and afraid of climbing the stairs. You'd better hurry up and accompany her!"

After Third Madam had gone, Fourth Master seemed lost in thought and said, "Isn't the dead man a relative of Mrs. Xu?"

Third Master answered, "Did I say he wasn't? It looks to me as if they specially sent Mrs. Xu to give us this news, which has, of course, been arranged on purpose."

Fourth Master asked, "Can it be that they want Sixth Sister to attend the funeral as a member of their family?"

Third Master scratched his head with the handle of his fan and said, "As a rule, it is right that..."

Simultaneously, both of them glanced at Sixth Miss while Bai Liu-su sat in the corner of the room, unhurriedly embroidering a pair of slippers. While Third Master and Fourth Master had been talking one after the other, it seemed that there had been no opportunity for her to speak. It was not until now that she nonchalantly said, "I've already divorced him; if I were to return to his home as his widow, people would laugh their heads off." She continued working on her slippers as if nothing had happened. However, her hands broke out in a cold sweat. The needle became hard to handle, and she could not remove it from her work.

Third Master said, "Sixth Sister, it's not what you think. We all know that he let you down in many respects in the first place. Now he's dead. Can you still be letting it weigh on you? Naturally, the two concubines he left behind won't be able to bear living out the rest of their lives as widows. If you return all dignified and impressive, decked out in morning, who would dare laugh at you? Though you don't have any children, he has many nephews. You can choose one of them to adopt.[81] His leftover property may not be much, but his family is a prosperous one. Even if they sent you to look after the clan hall, you and the child would never starve." Bai Liu-su responded with a cold smile, "You are very thoughtful on my account, unfortunately it's a bit too late. I've been divorced for seven or eight years. According to the way you talk, the legal procedure we went through was a joke! We can't fool with the law!"

Third Master answered, "Don't always use the law to scare me. Laws are changed every day while the natural feelings and human relationships that I'm talking about are unchangeable. Alive you are a member of their family; dead, you are their ghost. No matter how towering a tree is, it's leaves always fall to return to its roots."

Liu-su stood up to say, "Why didn't you say so eight years ago?"

Third Master replied, "I was afraid you might be suspicious that we didn't want you."

"Ah, you are not afraid that I'm suspiscious now? You spent all of my money. Don't you worry that I'm suspicious?"

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[81] In the traditional concept, boys are more important than girls because they can carry the family name and continue the family line. Moreover, though married, boys will still live in their parents' home with their wives and children, in order to take care of the family business and their parents. Therefore, in our story, Liu-su is encouraged to adopt a boy from among her ex-husband's nephews as security for old age.

Leaning closer to her face, Third Master exclaimed, "I spent your money! How much money did I spend? You live in our house, eat our food, and drink our water. It was okay to support one more person before. It meant nothing to add one more pair of chopsticks. But now, you should go out and ask what the price of rice is. I didn't mention money, how could you?"

Fourth Madam stood behind Third Master, laughed and added, "Normally, one's own flesh and blood should never mention money; if one does, then it leads to more troubles. I told your fourth brother long ago, 'Fourth Eldest, you should persuade Third Master that they shouldn't use Sixth Sister's money to buy gold and stocks; otherwise bad luck will surely strike!' Didn't you see: as soon as she married, her husband became a spendthrift; and then, since she has returned home, the family has been bled dry. What a born jinx!"

Third Master continued, "Fourth Madam is right. If we had not let her join in our business at the beginning, we wouldn't have had to suffer such a crushing defeat."

Liu-su was so angry that her whole body trembled uncontrollably. she put the half embroidered slippers against her chin, which was also quivering as if it was going to fall.

Third Master spoke again, "I recall the time when you came back crying and raised hell to get a divorce. The only thing to blame is that I have such a strong sense of righteousness. When I saw that you had been beaten so seriously, I had no heart to refuse you. Therefore, I patted my chest and said, 'All right! Although I am poor, there will always be a bowl of rice in my house for my sister!' I thought every young couple needed to burn off a little steam, and I guessed that you would change your minds. If I had known that you were serious about making a clean break, do you think I would have helped you get divorced? Splitting up a marriage breaks a family line. I have sons, and I still hope they will support me in my old age."

As angry as she could be, Liu-su, nevertheless, laughed loudly and said, "Yes, yes, it's my fault, You became poor because I sucked you dry; your business failed because I tied you down; if one of your sons should die, this would also be a result of me damaging your unrewarded virtues!"

Fourth Madam quickly grabbed her son's collar and pushed him into Liu-su, bumping his head. She exclaimed, "You put a curse on these boys without any reason. With your words, if my son dies, I will hold you responsible!"

Quickly dodging and evading the charge, Liu-su then ran to Fourth Master. She held him and cried, "Fourth Brother, see, see -- Give us your honest opinion!"

Fourth Master said, "Don't get excited. If you have something to say, say it calmly. Let's plan for the long term. Actually what Third Brother says is all for your own good..."

In a rage, Liu-su let go of him and walked into the inner room.

There was no light in that room. She peered through the gauze bed-curtains and could dimly make out her mother lying in the big redwood bed, waving a white round fan. Liu-su stepped to the front of the bed, then suddenly feeling weak in the knees, knelt down. She bent over the edge of the bed and cried, "Mom."

Old Mrs. Bai's ears were not bad. She had heard the entire argument in the outer room. She coughed and held out her hand for the spitoon beside the pillow. She spat into it and said, "Your fourth sister-in-law is too talkative; you shouldn't pay any attention to her. As you know, each person has their own problems. Your fourth sister-in-law was born with as strong personality. She used to run the house, but your fourth brother disappointed her, constantly whoring and gambling. What he did not only damaged his own health -- what's worse is that he also embezzled the family's common funds, which shamed your fourth sister-in-law terribly. Therefore, she had to let your third sister-in-law manage the household, but she has, in fact, been unable to take this comedown and always feels unhappy. In addition, your third sister-in-law is not very healthy. To sustain this family is not easy for her. In any case, you should try to show them a little consideration."

Liu-su saw that her mother had only taken the easy way out, so she said nothing, and fell into silence.

Old Mrs. Bai turned over to face the wall and tried to sleep. Then she added, "During the past two years, we scraped things together and sold some land which gave us just enough to live on for two years. Now, things are different. I am getting old, and will die anytime. I can't take care of you any longer. Besides, there's not a banquet in the world that doesn't have an ending. Staying with me is not a permanent solution. You'd better go back, adopt a child, suffer for ten more years. Then you'll be able to lift your head again one of these days."

At this time, the doorflap was moving. Old Mrs. Bai asked, "Who is it?"

Fourth Madam stuck out her head, "Mother, Mrs. Xu is still downstairs, waiting to discuss Seventh Sister's marriage matter with you."

Old Mrs. Bai answered, "I'm coming. You turn on the light." The room brightened up. Fourth Madam propped the old lady up and waited on her as she put on her clothes. Then she helped her get out of the bed. Old Mrs. Bai asked, "Has Mrs. Xu found anyone suitable?"

Fourth Madam replied, "According to her, the one she found seems not too bad, but he is a few years older."

Old Mrs. Bai coughed and said, "Bao-luo, this girl will be twenty-four this year, which is honestly a thorn in my heart. All my worrying about her has been for nothing. People all say that since she is not really my child, I have intentionally delayed her marriage." Old Mrs. Bai walked out of the room, supported by Fourth Madam. Old Mrs. Bai said to her, "Go get my new tea leaves to make a bowl of tea for Mrs. Xu. The stuff in the green tin box is Long-jing given to me by Eldest Aunt last year, the other in the long box is Bi-luo-chun. Don't mix them up."

Fourth Madam nodded in agreement and at the same time shouted, "Hey! Somebody turn on the light!" There was a sound of footsteps, and then in came some rough looking children to help the maid support the old lady downstairs.

Fourth Madam remained in the outer room by herself, and went through all the drawers looking for the old lady's private tea leaves. All of a sudden, she began to laugh, "Hey! Seventh Sister, where have you been hiding? You scared me! I was just wondering where you had disappeared to in a flash!"

Buo-luo answered in a soft voice, "I was on the balcony catching the breeze."

Fourth Madam tittered, "Shameful! Let me tell you, Seventh Sister. In the future, when you have a husband, you should be more careful. Don't give into your temper. Do you think divorce is a simple matter? Some people just split up whenever they feel like it; it's so commonplace! Indeed is it really that easy? Your fourth brother wasn't successful, but did I divorce him? I still have my own home. I'm not the one that has no place to go. But even during those bad times, I had to take all that into consideration. I am conscientious and I have enough self-control not to impose on others. I still a certain sense of shame!"

Coldly kneeling in front of her mother's bed, Bai Liu-su listened to Fourth Madam's words. She tightly clasped the embroidered slippers against her chest. A needle on the slippers picked her fingers, but she was oblivious to the pain. She murmured, "This house is impossible to live in...impossible." Her voice was both discouraged and light at the same time, just as stringy as a broken cobweb. It was as if she were in a dream and that her head and face were veiled with those dust-covered strands of webbing. In a fog, she threw herself forward as if she were embracing her mother's knees like a cushion and began to sob, "Mom, Mom. You must stand up for me!"

In her imagination, her mother began to smile silently, but without any emotion. She held her mother's legs and shook them vigourously. She cried, "Ma! Ma!" Seemingly, it was many years earlier again. She was only about ten years old. After coming out of the theater in a downpour, she had been jostled and separated from her family. She stood alone on the sidewalk, staring at people who also were staring at her through rain-splattered car windows -- layer upon layer of transparent glass -- countless strangers they were. All people were isolated in their own small worlds. Even if she broke her head she could never break into their lives. It was as if she were paralyzed. Suddenly, she heard footsteps in back of her and guessed that it was her mother coming. She tried hard to pull herself together, not saying a word.

However, the mother she prayed for and her real mother were two completely different individuals.

That person walked to the edge of the bed and sat down. But when she opened her mouth, it was Mrs. Xu's voice.

Mrs. Xu tried to calm her down. "Sixth Miss, don't be sad. Get up; get up; it's so hot..."

Liu-su propped herself up on the bed and stood up with difficulty, saying, "Auntie, I...I can't bear it here any longer. I've known for some time that they disliked me, but they'd never quite come out and said it. Today, I've faced the battle gongs and war drums and declared war; I have no face to go on living."

Mrs. Xu pulled her down to sit on the edge of the bed with her, and whispered, "You are too honest -- no wonder the others have taken advantage of you. Your brothers transferred your money from here to there, and finally spent it all! So it's quite fitting if they have to support you for the rest of your life."

Liu-su rarely heard fair words like these. Without asking if Mrs. Xu really meant what she said, she felt a warmth emanating from her heart, and tears flowed like rain. She said, "How could I have ever been so stupid! It's just this little bit of money that's forcing me to stay even if I want to leave!"

Mrs. Xu said, "Young people aren't afraid of not having a life in front of them."

Liu-su replied, "If I had a life in front of me, I would have left earlier! I don't have much education, and I'm not strong enough to do anything physical, what kind of job can I get?"

Mrs. Xu said, "Finding a job is but a joke; finding a man is something true."

Liu-su answered, "I'm afraid it won't work; my life was finished a long time ago."

Mrs. Xu disagreed, "Only rich people who don't have to worry about food and clothes have the right to say such things. A penniless person can't end his life even if he wants to! Even if you shave your head and become a nun, or you beg alms you'll still be part of this mundane world -- you can't escape from men!"

Liu-su lowered her head and kept quiet. Mrs. Xu continued, "If you had asked me to take care of this matter two years earlier, it would have been much easier."

Liu-su said with a slight smile, "That's for sure! I'm already twenty-eight."

Mrs. Xu soothed her, "A talented person like you needn't worry about being twenty-eight. I'll keep my eyes open for you. While we're on the subject. I have to find fault with one thing. You've been divorced for almost eight years. If you had made your decision to flee earlier, you would have saved yourself a lot of embarrassment!"

Liu-su explained, "Auntie, you must know, how can a family like ours allow its members to go out make their friends? Depending on them, I can say they wouldn't agree, but even if they did, I still have two younger sisters who aren't married yet. Then there are the daughters of my third and fourth brothers who are also growing up. There's not even enough time to arrange their marriages; how can they take care of mine?"

Mrs. Xu smiled and said, "Speaking of your younger sisters, I'm still waiting for their answers."

Liu-su asked, "Is there any hope for Seventh Sister's marriage?"

Mrs. Xu said, "It is beginning to take shape. Just now on purpose I left mother and daughter alone discuss it. I told them I would come up to see you for a while. Now I must leave. Would you please accompany me downstairs?"

Liu-su had no choice but to help her down. The stairs were old, and Mrs. Xu was quite plump, so each step was accompanied by a loud creak. When they came to the main room, Liu-su wanted to turn on the light, but Mrs. Xu said, "Please don't, I can see. They are in the east room. Come with me. Everybody will chat and laugh and the matter will pass. Otherwise, tomorrow when you eat, you won't be able to avoid seeing each other, and that will create an impasse."

Liu-su couldn't bear to hear the word "eat," and piercing pain stabbed her heart. Chocked with misery but forcing a smile, she said, "Thank you very much, Auntie. But I don't feel well now, and I'm not really up to seeing others. I'm afraid I'm so despondent that I may say something to cause a catastrophe, and let you down after all your concern for me."

Seeing Liu-su's determination not to go, Mrs. Xu gave up. She pushed open the door herslef and entered.

The door closed again, and the main hall remained in the dark. Through the lattice glass on the top of the door, two squares of yellow light shone onto the green tile on the floor. Dimly, one could see that there was a row of bookcases piled up high and low along the wall. The cases, made of red sandalwood, were carved with a few words which were painted green. In the center of the wall, above the stool and in a glass cover sat an enamel chime clock whose workings had worn out years ago. The couplet was painted on red paper with black words against a background design of glittering gold "long life" characters. In the faint light, each word seemed to float in space, far away from the paper. Liu-su felt that she was as illusory and unreal as one of the characters on the scroll. The Bai's house was a little similar to a fairy's cave. When one lived idly for a day here, it was a thousand years on earth. But a thousand years here was also the same as one day because everyday was the same, dull and boring. Liu-su crossed her arms holding onto her neck. Seven or eight years had passed in the twinkling of an eye. Was she still young? It doesn't matter, in another two years she'd be old. Here, youth is not cherished. There was plenty of youth here -- babies were being born one after another, new shining eyes, new tender, rosy mouths, new wisdom. Then, as the years pass, the eyes get weaker, the man gets weaker, and another generation is born. This generation is then absorbed into the glorious gold-sprinkled vermillion background, and little by little the sparkling gold becomes the frightened eyes of men gone by.

Liu-su suddenly cried out. She covered her own eyes, staggered up the stairs, up to the stairs...to the second floor. When she entered her own room, she turned on the light and pressed herself against the dressing mirror, examining herself carefully. It was all right, she still was not too old. Liu-su's tiny figure was the kind that didn't show age. She would always have a splendid waistline, and child-like budding breasts. Her face, normally as white as porcelain, had now changed to a jade color -- a half transparent, light green jade. Her chin had been round, but in recent years it had gradually become pointed, which made her small face even more lovely. The shape of her face was fairly narrow, but the the distance between her eyebrows was quite wide. In addition, she had a pair of delicately charming, liquid eyes. On the balcony, Fourth Master began to play the _huqin_ again. Hearing the melodious tone, Liu-su couldn't help turning her head, cast a fleeting glance, and make a gesture. Because of her performance in the mirror, the _huqin_ didn't sound like a _huqin_ anymore, but rather the profound temple dance music played with pan pipes, flute, and zither. She took a few steps to the left, and then, a few to the right. Each pace she took seemed to rhyme with the beat of some lost ancient music. All of a sudden, she smiled -- an ominious malicious smile; the music then stopped. Outside the huqin still continued, but the far removed moral tales that the huqin was playing had nothing to do with her now.

At this time, Fourth Master, staying away from everybody, played the huqin on the balcony alone because he knew the family meeting downstairs would allow him no opportunity to speak. After Mrs. Xu left, the Bais continued deliberating and analysing her suggestions. Mrs. Xu planned to match Bao-luo to a person named Fan, who recently had kept quite close contact with Mr. Xu in the mining business. Mrs. Xu had always been familiar with his family background, and she thought he was absolutely dependable. Fan liu-yuan's father was a famous overseas Chinese, who had quite a bit of property scattered in Ceylon, Malaysia, and some other places. Fan Liu-yuan was thirty-two this year and his parents had both passed away. When the Bais had questionned Mrs. Xu as to why such a perfect marriage partner was still unattached, Mrs. Xu told them that when Fan Liu-yuan came back from England, numerous women shamelessly sent their daughters up to his door and stubbornly pushed them upon him. They had all locked horns with each other, each trying to display her own talents. It had been terribly noisy and hectic.

This kind of flattery had spoiled him. Since then, he'd regarded women as mud under his feet. Owing to his rather unusual childhood environment, his temperament had been a bit odd from the start. His parent's union was out of wedlock. His father had once gone abroad on an inspection tour; while he was in London he'd met an overseas Chinese "social butterfly," and they'd married secretly. His original wife eventually caught wind of this; and fearing her revenge, the second wife had never dared return to China. The result of all this was that Fan Liu-yuan had been brought up in England. After his father's death Fan Liu-yuan had his fingers burned many times trying to define his legal status in spite of the fact that the first wife only had two daughters. He had wandered destitute in England and suffered a good deal. Finally he obtained the right of his inheritance. Even now, Fan's family was still hostile to him. Therefore, he stayed in Shanghai most of the time, and he didn't go back to the old place in Guangzhou at all without just cause. Because he had suffered much hardship when he was young, he gradually travelled down the path of sensualism. He patronized whore houses and gambling dens and everything else, but he had no intention of enjoying the pleasures of family life.

Fourth Madam Bai stated, "A person like him must be very fussy. Seventh Sister is not the child of the first wife. I am afraid that he won't even give her a second glance. What a pity if we let such a good match pass by."

Third Master said, "He himself is illegitimate."

Fourth Madam answered back, "But look, what a smart fellow he is! How can you hope to get him simply by depending only on Seventh Miss' naivete? On the contrary, my elder girl is quite clever. Don't look down upon her. Although she is small, she has a big heart. She's really very intelligent!"

Third Madam then said, "But it seems their ages are too far apart."

Fourth Madam disagreed, "Hey! You don't know. The more a person's like that, the more they like young girls. If my big one isn't right, I still have my second daughter."

Third Madam laughed and said, "Your second one is twenty years younger than Mr. Fan."

The Fourth Madam tugged her, and said with a serious look, "Third sister-in-law, don't be so foolish! You protect Seventh Miss, but what is she to the Bai family? She came from the belly of another woman. What's she to us? If she marries him, nobody can expect to get any benefit from it! I'm just thinking about our welfare." However, old Mrs. Bai has it fixed in her mind that all the relatives would say she mistreated Seventh Miss, and so she's decided to go along with the original plans: let Mrs. Xu select a date to invite everybody and introduce Bao-luo to Fan Liu-yuan.

Using a double-barreled approach, Mrs. Xu in the meantime also found Liu-su a person named Jiang, who was working in the customhouse. He had recently become widowed and was left with five children. Therefore, he was eager to remarry. Mrs. Xu thought it better to finish with Bao-lu first, then try this match for Liu-su, because Fan Liu-yuan would soon be leaving for Singapore.

In regards to Liu-su's getting married again, the Bai family basically regarded it as a joke. They wanted to send her away, and there was no better solution. They'd simply not bother paying any attention to it, and just let Mrs. Xu struggle with it. In contrast, for Bao-luo's marriage matter, everyone was busy cackling and flying about. They were both daughters, but for one of them they were burning up the place, while for the other they were as cold as could be! This situation was hard for Liu-su to bear. The old Mrs. Bai got everybody in the family to dig out all their jewelery, whatever she could put on Bao-luo, she did. The old Mrs. Bai also forced Third Madam to take out the piece of silk that her daughter had received from her godmother on her birthday, and had it made into a qipao for Bao-luo. The old lady's private collection from many years ago included many furs. Since Bao-luo couldn't wear fur in the summer time, the old Mrs. Bai pawned a mink coat, and used the money to re-set some of the jewelery into a more fashionable style. The value of these things, like the pearl earrings, jade bracelet, and emerald ring need not be mentionned. The idea was that they had to dress up Bao-luo as opulently as possible.

When the day came, the old lady, Third Master, Third Madam, Fourth Master and Fourth Madam naturally all had to go. Bao-luo had indirectly heard Fourth Madam's plot, and was truly angry with her. She was determined not to go out with Fourth Madam's two daughters, but she felt embarrassed to say that she didn't want them along. Therefore, using all her might, she dragged Liu-su along. The rented car that came was packed full with the seven of them. They wouldn't squeeze aonther one in, and Fourth Madam's daughters Jin-zhi and Jin-chan were unfortunately eliminated from the party. They departed at five o'clock in the afternoon, and didn't come home till eleven o'clock. As excited as they were, how could Jin-zhin and Jin-chan set their minds at ease and go to sleep. They watched as everybody came back, but not one of them said a word. With a long face, Bao-luo walked into the old lady's room. Like a gust of wind, she quickly took off all the jewelery, gave it back to old Mrs. Bai and returned to her own bedroom without a word. Jin-zhi and Jin-chan dragged Fourth Madam to the balcony and bombarded her with questions about the party.

Angrily, Fourth Madam said, "I've never seen girls like you! It wasn't you who had a marriage interview. What are you both so hot about?"

Third Madam followed them out onto the balcony, and said to them in a soft voice, "Don't let your talk arouse other people's suspicions."

At that, Fourth Madam turned her face toward Liu-su's room and yelled, "I was just pointing to the pot and calling the kettle black. So I cursed her. So what? It's not that she hasn't seen a man for centuries, but why did she become befuddled as soon as she saw a strange man? Has she gone crazy?"

Jin-zhi and Jin-chan were confused by their mother's anger.

Third Madam tried her best to calm down Fourth Madam, in the meantime, she also told the two girls, "At the beginning we went to see a movie."

Jin-zhi cried in surprise, "A movie?"

Third Madam continued, "Isn't that strange? The purpose of this interview was to let them see each other, but sitting in that kind of darkness, you can't see a thing. Mrs. Xu told me later that it had all been Mr. Fan's idea; he was playing a dirty trick. he wanted her to wait for two or three hours, until the oil had come out of her face and the makeup had all faded. Then he'd be able to see what she was really like. But this only what Mrs. Xu speculated. In my opinion, that Mr. Fan wasn't sincere from the beginning, He took us to the movies because he was just too lazy to entertain us. After the theater, didn't he try to sneak away?"

Fourth Madam couldn't help interrupting, "Who says? Today's interview started off well. If our own people hadn't been causing such a ruckus in there, then we probably would have had a seventy or eighty percent chance!"

Jin-zhi and Jin-chan asked simultaneously, "What happened then, Third Auntie?"

Third Madam replied, "Then, Mrs. Xu grabbed him up suggested we all go for a meal. He then said he would treat us."

Fourth Madam clapped her hand and said, "Having a meal is having a meal, but he knew perfectly well that our seventh Miss couldn't dance; so what did he take us to the dance hall for? The fact is that Third Brother is to blame. He's always out running around. When he heard Fan telling the driver to head to the dance hall, why didn't he stopped him?"

Third Madam quickly answered, "There are so many big hotels in Shanghai, how could he know which ones have dance halls and which ones don't. He is not like Fourth Master who has plenty of time on hand. He doesn't have the time to check out things like that!"

Jin-zhi and Jin-chan would have liked to know what happened afterwards, but Four Madam kept butting in, and Third Madam lost her interest in telling them any more details. She simply said, "Then we went for a supper. After the supper, we came home."

Jin-chan asked again, "What kind of person is that Fan Liu-yuan?"

Third Madam answered, "How would I know? Altogether I didn't hear him say more than three sentences." After thinking for a while, she added, "I suppose he dances fairly well!"

"What?" Jin-zhi questionned in surprise, "Who did he dance with?"

Fourth Madam hurried to answer, "Who else? It could only be your Sixth Aunt! We're a literary family, and none of us was allowed to learn dancing. It's only after getting married that she learned that trick from her good-for-nothing husband. Shameless! If someone asks you, you just have to tell him that you can't, and that's that! Not knowing how to dance is nothing to be ashamed of. Like your Third Auntie and like me, we're all from wealthy families. Having already lived half of our lives, what haven't we seen? We just can't dance!"

Third Madam sighed and said, "Once, perhaps, out of politeness. But she had to dance twice, and even a third time!"

Hearing this, Jin-zhi and Jin-chan were agasp and tongue-tied.

Turning her face toward Liu-su's room again, Fourth Madam cursed, "Heartless idiot! If you think that by destroying your sister's affair, you would have a chance, then I'm telling you now that you'd better forget it! There have been countless young girls that he wouldn't even look at. Do you think he'd want a withered flower like you?"

Liu-su and Bao-luo were sharing a bedroom. By this time, Bao-luo had alreday gone to sleep. Liu-su was squatting on the floor gropping in the dark trying to light a mosquito coil. She heard the talk on the balcony, very clearly, but this time she was very calm. She lit a match, and watched it burn. The little pennant-like flame was flickering in its own air currents. It moved closer and closer to her fingers. She gave a puff and blew out the flame. Now only the glowing red stick was left. Gradually, the matchstick shriveled down into a ghostly ashen-colored, curled figure. She threw the scorched match into the ashtray. What had happened today, she hadn't done on purpose, but nevertheless, she'd taught them a lesson. They thought her life had finished? It was still early yet! She smiled. In her heart, Bao-luo must certainly be cursing her, probably even a lot more unpleasantly than Fourth Madam had. However, she knew that although Bao-luo hated her, still, she would now look at her with new eyes, regarding her with deep respect. It doesn't matter how good a woman is, if she can't obtain a man's love, she can't win respect from the members of her own sex. Women are really low that way.

Was Liu-yuan honestly fond of her? Not likely. She didn't believe a word that he had said to her. She could tell that he was the kind of man who was used to telling lies to women. She couldn't be careless -- she had no relatives to rely upon. She only had herself. On the bed frame hung her moonlight-white, thin qipao. Bending over, she sat down on the floor, held onto the hem of the qipao, and quietly snuggled it to her cheeks. The green smoke of the mosquito coil drifted up one curl after another, seeping its way into her brain. In her eyes, tears were glistening.

A few days later, Mrs. Xu came to the Bai's house again. Fourth Madam had long predicted, "Since our Sixth Miss has messed up everything, it's obvious that it's all over for Seventh Miss as well. Could it be that Mrs. Xu was not angry? If Mrs. Xu blamed Sixth Miss, could she still be willing to find a match for her? This would be the same as going for wool and coming back fleeced." As expected, Mrs. Xu was not as eager to help as before. She beat about the bush, explaining why she hadn't come in the past two days. Her husband was leaving for Hong Kong on business. If everything went smoothly, they would consider renting a house and living there for six months or a year. Therefore, she had been busy packing for the last two days preparing to go with him. As for Bao-luo's matter, because Mr. Fan had alreday left Shanghai, she had to put it aside for the time being. As for Liu-su's possible match with Mr. Jiang, Mrs. Xu had found out that he had already had someone else. To separate them would be difficult. It would be best to forget about it. When Third and Fourth Madam heard what Mrs. Xu had just said, their eyes twinkled at each other as they suppressed their smiles.

Mrs. Xu frowned and continued, "My husband has quite a few friends in Hong Kong, but too bad they're all so far away....However, if Sixth Miss can make the trip there, she may have many opportunities. For the past two years in Hong

Kong, it can really be said that there is a wealth of talented people from Shanghai. Shanghainese are naturally attracted to Shanghainese, so it's said the hometown girls are very welcome there. If Sixth Miss went, would she have to worry about not being able to find someone not suitable? She truly could pick a bunch and then choose one!"

Everybody felt that Mrs. Xu was very good at talking. It was just two days ago that she had been vigorously matchmaking, but now all of a sudden, everything had vanished like smoke. She couldn't back down with good grace, so she quibbled about, giving a few perfunctory excuses.

Old Mrs. Bai sighed and said, "Making a trip to Hong Kong is easy to talk about, but actually..."

She was abruptly cut off by Mrs. Xu, who said, "If Sixth Miss is willing to go, it'll be on me. I agreed to help her and help her I must." They looked at each other in surprise - even Liu-su herself was shocked. At the beginning she had thought that Mrs. Xu volunteered to introduce someone to her because she had truly sympathized with her and offered the help from a sense of justice. For her sake, Mrs. Xu would do some legwork in trying to find a beau. She was even prepared to arrange a banquet to treat Mr. Jiang. Their Friendship was good enough for all that. But to pay for the travel expenses and take her along to Hong Kong would cost Mrs. Xu a fortune! Why would Mrs. Xu want to spend this money on her without a reason? Although there are many good people in the world, there are not many fools willing to part with money for the sake of friendship. Mrs. Xu obviously had something in the back of her mind. Could it be Fan Liu-yuan's trick? Mrs. Xu had once mentionned that her husband kept quite close contact with Fan Lin-yuan on business. Both the husband and wife were probably eager to ingratiate themselves to Fan Liu-yuan. It was also possible that they wanted to fawn on him by sacrificing an unimportant and helpless relative.

While Liu-su was still lost in her thoughts, Old Mrs. Bai started to talk, "How could we do that? We could never let you..."

Roaring with laughter, Mrs. Xu said, "Never mind. This is but a small treat -- I can afford it! Besides, I'm actually hoping Sixth Miss can help me. I'm taking along two children. I have high blood-pressure, and I can't afford to get very tired. If she is on the journey, then everything will be taken care of. I'm not taking her as an outsider; I may be giving her a lot of trouble!"

Old Mrs. Bai quickly said a few polite words for Liu-su.

Mrs. Xu then turned to Liu-su, and asked directly, "Well, Sixth Miss, how about coming along with us? Even if it's just sightseeing it's still worth it."

Liu-su lowered her head and answered with a smile, "You treat me too well." At the same time, she quickly took account of everything. The matter about Mr. Jiang was hopeless. Later on, if anyone wanted to introduce somebody to her, he would probably be more or less the same type as Mr. Jiang, or even worse perhaps. Liu-su's father had been a famous gambler, who had lost the family fortune. He had been the first that led them along the road to poverty. Liu-su's hands had never touched dominoes or dice, yet she also liked gambling. Now she decided to use her fortune as a stake to gamble with. If she lost, she would ruin her reputation thoroughly, and wouldn't even be able to be the step-mother of the five children. If she won, she might obtain what everybody coveted most: Fan Liu-yuan. This would give her some measure of revenge.

She accepted Mrs. Xu's invitation. Mrs. Xu wanted to leave within the week, and Liu-su was busy packing her clothing. Even though she didn't have many valuable possessions; and there was really nothing for her to pack, yet she still was confused for several days. She sold some odds and ends to buy a few dresses. As busy as she was, Mrs. Xu still found time to give her some advice. Seeing that Mrs. Xu still favored Liu-su so, the Bais gradually came to have a renewed interest in her. Besides suspecting her, they also had some misgivings. Behind her back, they would whisper about her; but to her face, they weren't quite as accusatory as before. Once in a while, they would even call her "Sixth Sister," "Sixth Aunt," or "Sixth Miss" because they were afraid that she would really marry a rich Hong Kong man, and return home in glory one day. They had to protect some face against that possible eventuality offending her wasn't worth the chance.

Together with the children, Mr. and Mrs. Xu picked her up and drove her to the harbor. They had a first class cabin on a Dutch boat. The boat was small and rocked violently. As soon as Mr. and Mrs. Xu got on the boat, the two of them together just lay down and were terribly seasick. Both their children cried all the way. Liu-su waited on them for the entire trip. It wasn't until the boat finally docked that she had the opportunity to finally go on deck to see the ocean. It was a baking-hot afternoon. From what she could see, the most conspiscuous thing surrounding the dock area was those huge advertising billboards. Red ones, orange ones, and pink ones were all reflected in the dazzling slick green sea. These brilliant colors sharply contrasted with each other, just like many swords bobbing and fighting violently in the water. Liu-su thought, in this city of contrasts, even just stumbling would be probably much more painful that it was in other places. So she couldn't help feeling quite nervous. Suddenly, she felt someone run over and hug her legs, almost knocking her over. She was startled, but when she bent down to look, it was only Mrs. Xu's child. She quickly pulled herself together and went back to help Mrs. Xu take care of everything. But who could predict that the ten pieces of luggage and these two children would never gather in the same place? When the luggage was together, in a flash they would be short one child. Liu-su got so tired of running here and there that she didn't bother going out to look at the ocean scenery.

After landing, they took two cabs to Repulse Bay Hotel. When the cars left the downtown area, they climbed up the hill for quite a while. As they drove down the road, they could see the yellow and red hillsides, and in the gaps in between them appeared dense green trees and the turquoise sea. As they approached the Repulse Bay, the hillsides and the trees seemed to grow brighter and brighter. Many tourists were coming back from the mountains, and when they passed by, one could see that each car was jammed with flowers, and fragments of laughter could be heard on the breeze.

As the cars stopped in front of the hotel gate, they still couldn't see where the hotel was. They got off and walked up very wide stone stairs. It wasn't until they reached a terrace filled with beautifully displayed plants and flowers, that they saw two yellow buildings above them. Mr. Xu had already reserved rooms long before. The waiters led them up a macadam road, and they passed through a dim dining room and musky hall as they walked towards the second floor. When they turned, they saw a door leading to a small balcony which had a trellis covered with climbing plants; the sun was shining on half of the wall. There were two people talking on the balcony, but they could only see the back of a girl with long, jet-black hair hanging straight down to her ankles, on which she wore gold-plaited bracelets. Her legs were bare, but it was hard to see if she was wearing any sandals. A little above her ankles the bottom of a pair of Indian style narrow trousers could be seen.

Concealed behind the girl was a man, who called out all of a sudden, "Hey! Mrs. Xu!" He then walked over, saying hello to Mr. and Mrs. Xu. He bowed slightly to Liu-su with a gentle smile on his face.

Then Liu-su noticed that Fan Liu-yuan was there. She earlier had the feeling she might meet him, but now that he was there in person she still couldn't stop her heart from beating so fast. The girl on the balcony vanished in a flash. Liu-yuan accompanied them upstairs. On the way, everyone acted as if they had just run into an old friend in a distant land, continually expressing thair surprise and delight. Although Fan Liu-yuan couldn't be considered handsome, still he seemed quite macho and possessed a certain bearing.

While Mr. and Mrs. Xu were directing waiters to move their luggage, Liu-yuan and Liu-su walked on ahead. Smiling Liu-su asked Liu-yuan, "Mr. Fan, didn't you go to Singapore?"

Liu-yuan replied in a soft voice, "I have been here, waiting for you."

Liu-su had not expected him to be so frank and dared not pursue the matter further, fearing that if he said it was actually he and not Mrs. Xu who had invited her to Hong Kong, she would be unable to get out of the predicament she found herself in. She decided to dismiss his remark as a joke and only smiled at him.

When Liu-yuan asked, Liu-su told him that her room number was one thirty. He then stopped in front of a room, saying, "here we are."

The bellboy brought the key and opened the door for them. Liu-su entered the room and couldn't help walking to the window directly. This whole room was just like a dark yellow picture frame, and the window was the picture. The surging waves outside seemed to splash on the curtains, coloring their edges blue.

Liu-yuan told the bellboy, "Put the bags in front of the closet." His response, so close to her ear, startled her. She turned and found that the porter had already gone but had left the door open. Liu-yuan leaned against the windowsill with one arm on the frame, blocking her vision. He gazed at her with a smile on his lips. Liu-su lowered her head.

Liu-su laughed, "You know what? The way you drop your head is one of your strong points."

Liu-su raised her head, laughed and said, "What? I don't understand."

Liu-yuan said, "Some people are good at talking, some are good at laughing, and some at housekeeping, but you're good at bending your head."

Liu-su replied, "I know I can't do anything; I am just terribly useless."

Liu-yuan laughed, "A useless woman is the cleverest woman."

Liu-su walked away laughing, "Let's not continue this. How about going next door and looking around."

"Next door?" Liu-yuan asked. "My room or Mrs. Xu's?"

Liu-su was shocked again. She asked, "Do you live next door?"

Liu-yuan had already opened the door for her and said, "My room is very messy, I can't let you see it."

He knocked on the door of No. 131. Mrs. Xu opened the door to let them in. "Have a cup of tea with us; we have a living room." Then she rang a bell to order some pastries as well.

Mr. Xu, coming out of the bedroom, said, "I just phoned Lao Zhu. He insisted on giving a banquet in honor of our visit. He invited everybody to the Hong Kong Hotel. Today!" Turning toward Liu-yuan, he continued, "Including you!"

Mrs. Xu said, "You're certainly in a good mood. Having been seasick for a few days, don't you want to get to bed early? Let's just forget about tonight."

Liu-yuan laughed, "Hong Kong Hotel has the most passe dance hall I've ever seen. The building, the lights, the decorations and the band are all old English style. It was all fashionable forty or fifty years ago, but is not interesting anymore, there's not really too much to see there, except for those queer looking foreigners who model themselves after the northerners and wear knickers in this hot weather."

"Why?" Liu-su asked.

"To get into the 'Chinese mood'!" he replied.

Mr. Xu laughed, "Since we are here, we've got to look at everything! I hope you'll put up with the torture and accompany us!"

Liu-yuan smiled, "I can't say for sure yet; don't wait for me."

Liu-su saw that he didn't want to go, but Mr. Xu was not the kind of person who visited dance halls frequently. He was seldom so happy. It seemed that he was really serious about introducing friends to her. She fetl even more puzzled.

But that night the people who went to the Hong Kong Hotel for the welcoming party were all older couples. The bachelors were all in their early twenty's. While Liu-su was dancing, Fan Liu-yuan suddenly appeared and cut in on another man. Under the lichee-colored lights, she couldn't see his dark face clearly, and only felt that he was abnormally quiet. Liu-su smiled, asking "Why aren't you talking?"

Liu-yuan answered with a smile also, "I've already said everything that I can say in front of others."

Liu-su tittered, "What do you have to say behind others, sneaking aroung like this?"

Liu-yuan answered, "Just some foolish thoughts. Not only can't I say them in front of others, but I don't even want to hear them myself. They embarrass even me. Words like 'I love you,' 'I'll love you forever.'"

Liu-su turned her face aside, and said softly, "Tsk! That's nonsense!"

Liu-yuan said, "First you blame me for not talking and now you're criticizing me for talking too much!"

Liu-su laughed, "Let me ask you, why didn't you want us to come to the dance hall?"

Liu-yuan explained, "Most men like to corrupt good women, and to reform bad women. I'm not like them, looking to make work for myself. I think good women better remain good."

Liu-su cast a sidelong glance at him and said, "You think you are different from other men? But I think you're just as selfish as the rest of them."

Liu-yuan laughed, "What selfishness?"

In her heart, Liu-su thought, "Your lofty ideal of a woman is someone who is incorruptible as well as tantalyzing. Incorruptible to others, and tantalysing to yourself! If I were a thoroughly good woman, you would probably have never noticed me!" She tilted her head towards him and asked, "You want me to be a good woman in front of others, but to be a bad woman with you."

Liu-yuan thought for a while and replied, "I don't get you."

Liu-su explained again, "You want me to be bad to others, but be good to you."

Liu-yuan laughed and said. "What? Now you've reversed them again? You're making me more and more confused!" He was silent for a while before adding, "you're wrong."

"Oh," Liu-su laughed, "Now you understand."

Liu-yuan said, "I don't care whether you're good or bad, I don't wnat you to change. It's hard to meet a genuine Chinese woman like you."

Uttering a sigh, Liu-su answered, "I'm old fashioned."

Liu-yuan said, "A genuine Chinese woman is the world's most beautiful, and will never be old fashioned."

Liu-su smiled, "A modern person like you..."

Liu-yuan interrupted, "Modern, you mean westernized I guess. I certainly don't count as a typical Chinese. But you know, a stubborn Chinese-like foreigner is even more stubborn than an old Chinese scholar."

Liu-su laughed, saying "You're stubborn; I am too. And as you said, the dance hall at the Hong Kong Hotel is the most stubborn..."

They both burst into laughter just as the music stopped. Liu-yuan held her arm as they returned to their seats. He smiled to all the people at the table, "Miss Bai has a headache, so I think I'll take her home now."

Liu-su couldn't have predicted that he would have done this, and she didn't know how to respond. Then again she didn't want to offend him; their relationship wasn't close enough yet to have an argument. Therefore she could only let him drape her coat over her shoulders, and made her apologies to everyone as they left the hall together.

Walking towards them was a group of foreign gentlemen. Like stars surrounding the moon, they were crowded around a woman who, as Liu-su had noticed earlier, had long jet-black hair braided into two plaits coiled high on the top of her head. That Indian woman, though wearing a Western style outfit, still had the pronounced color of the East. under her fine, black cloak, she was wearing a tight, gold-fish-colored long dress which covered even her arms and hands except for her glittering fingernails. The collar of the dress was v-shaped, and opened right down to her waist. This was the most fashionable style in Paris now; it had been dubbed "A Ray of Heaven." Her face was yellowish and shiny, like a gold-plated Goddess of Mercy, but her deep, black eyes seemed to have the Devil in them. She had a straight, classical nose, but it was a bit too sharp and too thin. Her thick, pink, pouty lips seemed a little swollen. Liu-yuan stopped and bowed slightly to her. As Liu-su stood there looking at her, she also gazed back at her in a dignified fashion. That pair of proud-looking eyes seemed a thousand miles off, staring at people from a distance.

Liu-yuan introduced them, "This is Miss Bai. This is Princess Saheiyini."

Without realizing it herself, Liu-su felt a sense of respect.

Princess Saheiyini stretched out one arm, touching Liu-su's hand with one fingertip and asked Liu-yuan, "Is this Miss Bai also from Shanghai?"

Liu-yuan nodded.

The Princess smiled, and said, "She doesn't look like a Shanghainese."

Liu-yuan smiled and asked her, "Then, what does she look like?"

First pressing her index to her cheek, the princess then opened her hands widely as though she were going to describe her, but yet couldn't find the right words. She shrugged her shoulders with a smile and walked inside.

Holding Liu-su's arm, Liu-yuan and she walked out of the hotel. Although Liu-su didn't undertsand much English, from their facial expressions, she realized what they had talked about. She then said with a smile, "It's clear I'm a country bumpkin!"

Liu-yuan said, "I just told you; you are a typical Chinese. Naturally you're a bit different from what she called Shanghainese."

After they got into a car, Liu-yuan spoke again, "Don't think the airs that she is putting on are justified. Outside she tells people that she is Prince Kelixina Kelanmupa's legitimate daughter. Because her mother fell out of the Prince's favor and was ordered to die, Saheiyini was then sent into exile destined to roam in foreign countries without being able to return home. Actually, it was the truth the she wasn't able to return home, but as for the rest, nobody can prove it."

Li-su asked, "Has she been to Shanghai?"

Liu-yuan replied, "She was quite well known in Shanghai. But later on she came to Hong Kong with an old Englishman. Did you notice the old man behind her? That's who supports her now."

Liu-su smiled, "You men are just like that. To her face, you always flatter her, but behind her back, you criticize her as being worthless. I wonder what you would say about me - the daughter of an official family whose fortunes have been going downhill and of a social scale lower than hers!"

Liu-yuan laughed, "Who would dare to put your names together in one breath?"

Twitching her lips, Liu-su said, "Maybe it is because her name is too long, you can't say it in one breath!"

Liu-yuan replied, "Don't worry. I'll take you for whatever kind of person you are. Make no mistake about that."

Liu-su seemed to relax and leaned against the car window. She asked in a low voice, "Really?"

What Liu-yuan had said didn't seem to be sarcastic. She had gradually discovered that when they were alone together, he was always respectful, like a gentleman. She didn't understand why he was so dignified in private and so uninhibited in front of others. She could not figure out if it was just his odd personality, or if he behaved that way for other reasons.

When they arrived at Repulse Bay Hotel, he helped her out of the car and pointed at the thick woods beside the road, saying "Look at those trees. They only grow in the South. The English call them 'wild fire flowers.'"

Liu-su asked, "Is it red?"

"Red!" Liu-yuan exclaimed.

In the dark of night, she couldn't see the redness, but instinctively, she knew it was as red as could be -- an uncontrollable red. Clusters and clusters of small flowers, hiding in the towering tree, were just like fire crackling and burning all along the path; even making the purple sky turn red. She lifted her face to look at it.

Liu-yuan continued, "The Cantonese call it the 'shadow tree'. Look at the leaves." The leaves were just like those of ferns. When the wind passes, those delicate black shadows shivered. One's ears could seemingly hear a melody, not a song yet, just like the tinkling sound made by wind chimes hanging on the eaves of a house.

Liu-yuan said to her, "Let's take a walk over there." Liu-su didn't answer him, but when he began to move, she just followed him. The houre was still early, so there were still many people strolling on the path -it didn't matter. A distance from the Repulse bay Hotel was a bridge in the air. On one side was a hill, and on the other side there was a grey brick wall guarding against falling rocks. Liu-yuan leaned against the wall as did Liu-su. She looked up. The wall was very high; one couldn't even see its lip. It was also cold and rough, the color of death. Her face set against the wall looked different. She was real flesh and blood with red lips, liquid eyes, and an intelligent face.

Liu-yuan looked at her and said, "I don't know why, but this wall reminds me of ageless testaments of love....One day when our civilization is completely ruined and everything is destroyed -- burned, bombed or collapsing, perhaps the only thing remaining will be this wall. Liu-su, if we should meet then at the foot of this wall....Liu-su, maybe then you would be sincere towards me, and maybe I would be sincere towards you."

Liu-su was annoyed and said. "You admit yourself to pretending. You don't have to drag me in! When did you catch me lying?"

Liu-yuan burst into laughter. He said, "Right, you are the most innocent person in the world."

Liu-su replied, "Hold on, don't tease me!"

After being quiet for a while, Liu-yuan sighed. Liu-su asked, "Is something bothering you?"

Liu-yuan replied, "Lots."

Liu-su sighed, "If a person who is as carefree as you are has to complain about his fate, then somebody like me would have hanged himself a long time ago."

Liu-yuan said, "I know you aren't happy. I know you've seen enough bad things and bad people around here, but if this is the first time you have seen them, it's even harder on you. I was just like that. When I first came to China, I was already twenty-four. I had dreamed of home many times. You can imagine how disappointed I was. I couldn't stand this kind of shock. I had no control and just became more and more corrupt. If...if you had known me then, you would probably forgive the way I am now."

Liu-su tried to recall the first time that she had seen her fourth sister-in-law. She cried out strongly, "Even so, that's still better. The first time you see something, no matter how bad or how dirty it is, the things and people aren't a part of you. But if you mix with them for a long time, how can you distinguish what constitutes them and what constitutes yourself?"

Liu-yuan fell into silence. He didn't say anything for a few moments. Then he said, "Maybe you are right. Maybe what I've said was nothing but an excuse, and I'm deceiving myself." Suddenly, he began laughing and said, "Actually, I don't need any excuse! I love playing around -- I've got the money and the time. Do I need to look for a good reason?" He thought for a while, he became perplexed again, and said to her, "I don't even understand myself - but I want you to understand me! I want you to understand me!" Although these were his words, in his heart he had already despaired. Still though he stubbornly begged, I want you to understand me!"

Liu-su was willing to try. In fact, within certain limits, she was willing to try anything. She turned her face towards him, and whispered: "I understand, I understand." She consoled him, but she couldn't help thinking of her own face in the moonlight...her delicate profile, eyes and eyebrows, the beauty was incredible and yet intangible. She slowly dropped her head.

Liu-yuan started to chuckle. Then changing the tone of his voice, he said with a smile, "Right, let's not forget, your specialty is the way you bow your head. However, some people say it is only teen-aged girls who are good at bowing. For those who are good at it, they are forever doing it. You know if you do it too often, it may cause your neck to become wrinkled!"

Liu-su's expression changed. She couldn't help but lift her hand and feel her neck.

Liu-yuan laughed, "Don't worry, you definitely don't have any. In a while, when you return to your room and nobody's around, you can open the button of your collar to have a good look."

Liu-su didn't say anything; she just turned and left.

Liu-yuan caught up to her and laughed. "I'll tell you why you are able to keep your beauty. Once Saheiyini said she dared not get married because once Indian women become idle, just staying in the house and sitting around all day, they get fat. But I said, "What about Chinese women? Even when they are just sitting around, they don't want to get fat because getting fat still requires the use of a little bit of energy. Being lazy still has its own advantages!"

Liu-su ignored him.

All along the way, Liu-yuan was on his best behavior, talking and joking to cool her down. Her expression didn't warm up until she got into the hotel, and then each of them returned to their own rooms. Liu-su surmised that Fan Liu-yuan had always been particular about spiritual love. She had to agree with him because the result of spiritual love was always marriage; on the contrary, sexual love usually leveled off at a certain stage, and the hope of marriage was very little. However, spiritual love had one flaw: in the course of love, women never understand men's words, but that isn't of any great importance. After all, it always ends in marriage, finding a house, buying furniture, hiring servants, and so forth. In this regard, women are more capable than men. When she thought of this, she put today's little misunderstanding out of her mind.

The next morning she didn't hear any squeaking from Mrs. Xu's room and knew that they would certainly be getting up very late. It seemed as if Mrs. Xu had mentioned that according to the hotel's regulations, if you ordered breakfast in your room, you had to pay extra plus giving a tip. Therefoe Liu-su decided ro save them a little bit of money and go to the dining hall to eat. Just as she finished washing and dressing, and was leaving her room, a bellboy waiting outside her room saw her and then went to knock on Fan Liu-yuan's door.

Liu-yuan came out immediately, smiled to her and said, Let's eat together." Then as they walked, he asked, "Have

Mr. and Mrs. Xu gotten up yet?"

Liu-su smiled: "They must have had a good time yesterday! I didn't hear them return; it must have been close to dawn."

They chose a table on the terrace outside the room and sat down. Outside the stone fence was a tall palm tree, whose shiny leaves were spread in every direction shivering slightly in the sunlight like a glorious, spurting fountain. Actually, there was a fountain underneath the tree, but it wasn't all that splendid.

Liu-yuan asked, "What do the Xus plan to do today?"

Liu-su answered, "I heard they are going to look for a place."

Liu-yuan said, "Let them look for one; we'll enjoy ourselves. Would you rather go to the beach or downtown and look around?"

Two afternoons before, Liu-su had used the binoculars to look at the nearby beach. Dotted with people as it was, things were really jumping, but she thought their behavior was a bit too free. She couldn't help feeling a little cautious, so she proposed that they go into town. They caught a special hotel bus and went into the heart of the city.

Liu-yuan took her to the Great China to eat. As soon as Liu-su noticed that the waiters spoke Shanghainese, and that the sounds coming from every table in the room were also in her native dialect, she felt a little peculiar and asked, "Is this a Shanghainese restaurent?"

Liu-yuan smiled, "Aren't you homesick?"

Liu-su laughed, "But..to come all the way to Hong Kong to eat Shanghai food seems a little bit foolish!"

Liu-yuan said, "when I'm with you, I like to do foolish things...even riding nowhere on a trolley, or watching a movie I've already seen twice..."

Li-su said, "That's because you've been affected by my foolishness, right?"

Liu-yuan laughed and said, "You can explain it any way you like."

After eating, Liu-yuan picked up his glass and drank his tea in one gulp. He lifted the glass up high and looked intently inside.

Liu-su asked, "If there is something to see let me see it too."

Liu-yuan said, "Face the light and look. The scene inside reminds me of the jungle in Malaysia." The tea left inside the glass fell over to one side. The green tea leaves stuck to the glass formed a special pattern. Facing the light, and looking up, they looked like a real banana tree. The tea leaves piled up at the bottom were all jumbled just like rootless creepers or rushes.

Liu-su lifted the glass to look, Liu-yuan then bent over to point. Through the dark green of the glass, Liu-su suddenly felt his eyes as though they seemed to be smiling, but yet actually weren't, as he stared at her. Smiling, she put down the glass.

Liu-yuan said, "I'll accompany you to Malaysia."

"To do what?" Liu-su asked.

Liu-yuan answered, "To return to nature." Then, his line of thought changed, and he added, "There is only one thing, I can't imagine you wearing a qipao running in the jungle... On the other hand, I can't imagine you not wearing a qipao either.

Liu-su quickly became serious and said, "Don't talk nonsense!"

Liu-yuan replied, "I'm serious. The first time I saw you, I just felt you shouldn't wear those fashionable long vests that show your upper arms; at the same time you shouldn't wear western clothes either. Perhaps the Manchurian qipao would be a little bit more suitable, but its lines are too harsh."

Liu-su said, "In short, I'm ugly! No matter how I dress, it doesn't look good!"

Liu-yuan laughed, "Don't get me wrong again! I mean you don't seem someone from this world. You have small gestures which have romantic air to them, almost like you were singing Peking opera!"

Liu-su raised her eyebrows, and laughed sarcastically, "Singing opera? Not by myself! Whenever I put on and act...I am forced to do so. If people play [illegible] small trick on me, and I don't do the same back, they would take me for a fool and pick on me!"

Hearing this, Liu-yuan felt dejected. He lifted empty glass, tried to get a swallow, and put it down again. He sighed, "Right, blame everything on me. I'm used to pretending because everybody pretends with me. Only to you did I say a few words of truth, but you didn't recognize it."

Liu-su said, "How do I know what's going on inside you?"

Liu-yuan replied, "Right, blame it all on me. But I've given you a great deal of thought. The first time I met you in Shanghai, I thought if you got away from your family, you might become a little bit more natural. Hoping to see you in Hong Kong gave me a hard time...and now I want to take you to Malaysia, to the primitive jungle..." He laughed at himself, his voice was hoarse and dry. Before he finished laughing, he called the waiter to bring over the bill. By the time they paid and left, he had returned to his original self, and regained his high class airs--and very refined they were!

After that, he took her everywhere and had fun doing everything: movies, Cantonese opera, casinos, the Gloucester Restaurant, Szeho Inn, the Green Bird Coffee Shop, an Indian silk store, a Sichuan Food Restaurant in Kowloon....In the evening, they often went out for walks till the very late hours. She could hardly believe that until now he had hardly even touched her hand. She was always alert that he would suddenly drop his mask and unpredictably grab her. However, the days passed one after another, and he still maintained his gentlemanly conduct. She felt as if she were facing a formidable enemy, but there was no movement at all. At first, she felt uneasy, like going downstairs and missing a step. Although she was always anxious, she gradually got used to it.

There was just that one time at the beach. By then Liu-su was more familiar with Liu-yuan, and she felt that it wouldn't do any harm to go to the beach, so they went and spent one morning there. THey were sitting side by side, but one facing east, and one facing west when Liu-su cried out that there were mosquitos.

Liu-yuan said: "They're not mosquitos, but a kind of insect called sandflies. When they bite, they leave a small red mark just like a red mole.

Liu-su went on, "I can't stand the sun."

Liu-yuan comforted her: "Let's get a little more sun, then we'll move under a sun shelter. I've rented one over there."

The thirsty sun lapped up the sea, gurgling and churning, making loud sounds. As well it sucked dry the moisture from people's bodies. Everyone felt like dried golden leaves floating in the air. Liu-su gradually felt a strange dizziness and happiness, but, she couldn't help crying out, "A mosquito's biting me!" She twisted her head and slapped her naked back.

Lui-yuan laughed, "That's difficult. I'll slap them for you and you slap them for me."

Indeed Liu-su watched and aimed carefully and then slapped his back. She cried out, "Darn! I missed it!"

Liu-yuan was also watching. They slapped back and forth at each other and laughed heartily together. All of sudden, Liu-su had had enough. She stood up and started walking toward the hotel. This time Liu-yuan didn't follow her. Liu-su walked under the shade of a tree. On the stone path between two reed sun shelters she stopped to take the sand off her skirt. Turning , she noticed Liu-yuan in the same place, lying on his back with his hands cushioned beneath his neck. Apparently he was daydreaming under the sun there, still turning into a golden leaf again. After Liu-su returned to her room, she again took out a pair of binoculars and looked out her window. Now there was a woman lying beside him with braids coiled on her head. Even if Saheiyini was burnt to ashes, Liu-su could recognize her.

From that day on, Liu-yuan flirted with Saheiyini every day. He had probably made up his mind to give Liu-su the cold shoulder for a while. Liu-su had become used to going out every day, and now, suddenly she had a lot of time on her hands, which she couldn't explain to Mrs. Xu. So she told them she had caught a cold and stayed in her room for two days. Fortunately, God understood and made it drizzle. Now that she had more excuses, she didn't need to go out.

One afternoon holding an umbrella she went for a walk in the hotel's garden. When she returned, the sky was getting dark. She thought Mrs. Xu and her family would be returning from their house-hunting very soon, so she sat under the eaves of the hall waiting for them. She opened the colorful oil-papered umbrella, and put it crossway on the railing and thus covered her face. The umbrella had a pink background with a pattern of dark green lotus leaves. Rain drops one after another down its ribs. It began to rain more heavily. There was the splashing sound of cars driving in the rain. A group of laughing men and women came upstairs pushing and holding onto one another. At their head was Fan Liu-yuan. Held by him, Saheiyini looked miserable. Her bare legs were splattered with mud. She took off her big straw hat and shook the water onto the ground. Liu-yuan glanced at Liu-su's umbrella, and said a few words to Saheiyini by the banister at the foot of the stairs. Saheiyini went upstairs by herself. Liu-yuan came over, pulling out his handkerchief, constantly wiping off his drenched clothes and face. Liu-su couldn't avoid exchanging a few words with him.

Liu-yuan sat down and said, "Did I hear that you weren't very well a couple of days ago?"

Liu-su answered, "It was just a summer cold."

He said, "This weather is terribly muggy. Just a while ago I went to the Englishman's yatch for a picnic. We sailed over to Psing-yi Island."

Liu-su went along and asked about the scenery on Psing-yi Island. While they were talking, Saheiyini came downstairs again. She had already changed into Indian clothes and wore a gosling-yellow, floor-length shawl. On the shawl, there was a two inch wide flower-design embroidered with silver thread. Holding onto the railing, she picked out a table which was on the far side of the veranda. She sat down with one arm leisurely draped across the back of a chair; her fingernails were covered with silver nailpolish.

With a smile, Liu-su said to Liu-yuan, "Aren't you going over?"

Liu-yuan replied, "She already has her man!"

Liu-su said, "That old Englishman? How can he manage her?"

Liu-yuan smiled and said, "He can't control her, but you can control me!"

Liu-su compressed her lips in a smile. "Oh! Even if I were the Governer of Hong Kong or the city god and governed all the people here, I still couldn't control you!"

Shaking his head, Liu-yuan said, "Any woman who isn't jealous is a bit abnormal!"

Liu-su burst into laughter. After a while, she asked, "What are you looking at me for?"

Liu-yuan also laughed, "I'm looking to see if you are prepared to treat me better from now on."

Liu-su answered, "Have you ever cared whether I treat you good or bad?"

Liu-yuan clapped his hands, saying, "Now you are saying something! Your tone seems a little bitter."

Liu-su couldn't help laughing aloud and said, "I've never seen anyone as shameless as you trying to make others jealous!"

At that point, the two of them decided to make up, and had supper together. Liu-su on the surface was warmer toward him, but her heart was rather pensive. His making her jealous was nothing but a goad to force her into throwing herself into his arms. She hadn't made up with him sooner, nor could she wait; instead she had made up with him now sacrificing herself in vain. He only thought that she had fallen into his trap. Even in her wildest dreams she could forget about him marrying her....It was clear that he wanted her, but he wasn't willing to marry her. Although her family was poor, they still had a reputation; everybody was a member of a social set. He couldn't afford being accused of seducing her; therefore, he adopted this kind of open and above-board attitude. She knew now, it had all been a pretence. He shirked all responsabilities. If one day she was abandoned, she definitely wouldn't have anyone to blame.

Thinking about this, Liu-su unconsciously gnashed her teeth and grunted bitterly. On the surface, she went through the motions with him as usual. Mrs. Xu had already rented a house in Happy Valley and was going to move very soon.

Liu-su wanted to move with them, but she also felt she had been putting them to trouble for over a month, and if she stayed any longer, it would be very embarassing. Remaining in a deadlock like this wasn't right, but to advance or to retreat were both difficult, and it was going to be tough for her to make her decision. One night, long after she had gone to bed and while she lay there tossing and turning unable to sleep, the telephone at the head of the bed began to ring loudly.

As soon as she picked it up she recognized Liu-yuan's voice saying, "I love you." Then he hung up.

Liu-su's heart went pit-a-pat. She held on to the receiver, stunned for a moment; then, she lightly placed it back on its cradle. Who could have guessed that as soon as she put it down, it rang loudly again.

She picked it up once again, Liu-yuan was on the other end saying, "I forgot to ask you something, do you love me?"

Liu-su coughed and then opened her mouth, but her voice was still hoarse. She spoke in a low voice, "You should have known long ago. Why do you think I came to Hong Kong?"

Liu-yuan sighed, "I've known for a long time, but, though the fact is obvious, I simply wouldn't believe it. Liu-su, you don't love me!"

Liu-su asked, "How do you know I don't?"

Liu-yuan didn't say anything. Then after a long time, he said, "There is a poem in the Book of Poetry..."

Liu-su quickly interrupted him: "I don't understand!"

Liu-yuan was impatient, "I know you don't. If you did, there would be no need for me to tell you! I'll read it for you:

Till death do us part.
To you I pledge my word.
I hold your hands
Wanting to grow old together.

My Chinese is quite bad. I don't know whether I can explain it correctly or not. I see it as the saddest of all poems. Life, death and departure, they are all major concerns, and not things that we can control. Compared to the strength of the outside world, we human beings are so small, so small! However, we are determined to say, 'I'll be with you forever. For our entire lives, we will never leave each other.' -- It seems that we ought to be able to be our own masters!"

Liu-su pondered for a moment, and then became uncontrollably angry. She said, "Why don't you say frankly that you don't want to marry, and that's all there is to it? Why do you have to beat around the bush saying how you can't be the master of your fate? Even a conservative like me still says 'a first marriage is decided by one's parents, second marriages are decided by one's own self!' You are a person without any ties. If you can't be your own master, who will be?"

Liu-yuan answered coldly, "If you don't love me, what can you do? Can you be your own master?"

Liu-su said, "If you really loved me, would you care about these things?"

Liu-yuan replied, "I'm not that stupid. It's not worthwhile for me to spend my money marrying someone with no feelings for me, someone who is going to restrict me. That's too unfair. It's not fair to you either. Hey, maybe you don't care. Basically you think marriage is just a long term prostitution..."

Liu-su didn't wait until he was finished, and slammed the receiver down with a bang. Her face was flushed with anger. How dare he insult her like this, how dare he! She sat on the bed. The darkness of the scorching night enveloped her like a grape-purple blanket. Her whole body was wet and itchy with perspiration. The ends of her hair on her neck and back were so prickly that it was hard to bear. She pressed her palms to her cheeks and found they were very cold.

The phone rang again. She didn't answer it and just let it ring. "Ring...ring..." The sound waves were especially piercing to her ears in the tranquility of her room, the tranquility of the hotel and the tranquility of Repulse Bay. Liu-su suddenly came to her senses and realized that she couldn't let the phone wake up the entire Repulse Bay Hotel. First, Mrs. Xu was in the next room. She very cautiously picked up the receiver and placed it on the bed sheet.

The air around her was to quiet, however, and although it was far away from her, she could still hear Liu-yuan's voice calmly saying, "Liu-su, can you see the moon through the window?"

Liu-su didn't know why, but all of a sudden she was choked with sobs. The moon in her tearful eyes was big and vague, silver with little green rays.

Liu-yuan continued, "Over here, there is a flowering plant hanging in the window, blocking half of it. Maybe it's rose; maybe it's not." He didn't say anymore, but he didn't hang up the phone either.

After a long, long time, Liu-su wondered if he had dozed off. Eventually though, there was a clicking sound as he lightly hung up. With trembling hand, Liu-su picked up the receiver from the bed sheet and put it back. She was afraid that he might phone her back a fourth time, but he didn't. It had all been a dream -- the more she thought about it, the more it seemed like a dream.

The next morning she didn't dare to ask him about it because he would certainly mock her, saying, "Dreams are what your heart is thinking!" Was it true that she missed him so much that even in her dreams he would call to say "I love you!"

His attitude wasn't any different from the usual. They went out for a whole day as always. Liu-su suddenly noticed how many people took them as man and wife. There were lots and lots of them -- waiters, as well as some old wives and old ladies in the hotel who would stop and chatter with her. She couldn't blame them for being mistaken. Liu-yuan was living next door to her, and they always went out and came in side by side. Late at night they still went down to the beach to walk, not trying to avoid suspicion at all. A nanny pushing a baby stroller walked by and nodded to Liu-su, calling her, "Mrs. Fan." Liu-su's face stiffened; she didn't know whether to smile or frown. She could only knit her eyebrows, glance at liu-yuan and whisper, "They don't know what to think!"

Liu-yuan laughed, "Don't worry about those who call you Mrs. Fan. It's those who call you Mrs. Bai that you should worry about!"

Liu-su frowned.

Liu-yuan rubbed his hand over his chin and smiled slightly, "You'd better not do injustice to this undeserved reputation!"

Li-su was astounded and looked at him. She suddenly realized how wicked this man really was. He had purposely acted familiar and intimate with her in front of other people, leaving her no way to prove that they hadn't had a physical relationship. Now she was in an awkward position from which there was no retreat. She couldn't go home, couldn't see her parents; she had no other resource than to be his mistress. On the other hand; if she compromised herself with him, not only would all her precious efforts be wasted, but she would never be able to recover in the future. She was determined not to! Even if she had this false reputation, he could only take advantage of her with words. But if they got down to the root of the matter, he still hadn't possessed her. Since he hadn't possessed her, maybe one day he would return to her with a somewhat more acceptable proposal.

She made up her mind and told Liu-yuan that she planned to return to Shanghai. Liu-yuan didn't insist on keeping her. On the contrary, he volunteered to accompany her back. Liu-su said, "There's no need of it. Don't you want to go to Singapore?"

Liu-yuan answered, "Since I have already delayed that trip, there is no harm in delaying it a little more. Besides, I've got something to take care of in Shanghai as well."

Liu-su knew that he still had the same plan; he was afraid of people not talking about them. The more people with seemingly irrefutable evidence, the more Liu-su had to defend herself. Naturally she wouldn't be able to settle down in Shanghai. However, Liu-su calculated that even if she didn't let him take her back, she couldn't hide anything from her family. She had forged ahead with no thought of the consequences, so she might as well let him accompany her on this journey. Mrs. Xu saw that they had been hot as fire for each other; and now all of a sudden they wanted to split up. She was completely amazed and questioned Liu-su and Liu-yuan. Although both of them tried to whitewash the matter in the same way, Mrs. Xu wasn't about to believe them.

On the boat, there were many opportunities for them to get closer; but since Liu-yuan had been able to resist the moonlight of Repulse Bay, he could also withstand the moonlight on the deck. From the beginning to the end, he hadn't said anything solid. His attitude was a little indifferent. However Liu-su could see that this contentment was a kind of complacent contentment -- he was sure that she couldn't jump out of his hands.

When they arrived in Shanghai, he took her home, but he didn't get out of the car himself. The Bai family had already heard the gossip and were convinced the Sixth Miss and Fan Liu-yuan had lived together in Hong Kong. Now, after fooling around with him for over a month, she came back as though nothing had happened, which made it clear that she was going to hurt the Bai family's honor.

Liu-su had seduced Fan Liu-yuan for nothing but his money. If she had really gotten his money, she wouldn't have returned home so quietly. Obviously she hadn't obtained anything from him. Ordinarily when a woman falls into a man's trap, she should die for her sins, but if a woman entraps a man, that makes her even more of a whore. If a woman wants to entrap a man but fails and on the contrary falls into the man's trap, then she is doubly a whore. Killing her would defile the knife. Normally, in the Bai house, if anyone committed a tiny indiscretion, all of the family would explode. But when they came across a really sensational scandal, they were all stunned beyond words. They reached the decision: "the family's shame must not be publicized." Then they all went off in their own directions telling relatives and friends, and forcing them to swear to keep everything secret. Afterwards they'd intimately ask their relatives and friends one by one if they knew about the affair or how much they had heard about it. Finally everyone felt that they couldn't hide the matter forever, and that they might as well open it all up, and as they dejectedly slapped their thighs, they talked frankly about it. This kept them all busy for the entire autumn. Therefore they had not taken any action against Liu-su yet. Liu-su knew full well that after returning this time, her life would be worse than before. She had already lost affection and felt no responsibility for the family. She had thought about looking for a job to support herself in a simple lifestyle. Although it wouldn't be easy, it was still better than staying at home taking their guff. However, taking a low-class job would make her loose her status as a lady. That status was actually useless, but to give it up would be a pity. Especially at the present time, she still hadn't given up hope on Fan Liu-yuan, so she couldn't degrade herself; otherwise, he would have more excuses for refusing to marry her. Hence, no matter what, she had to restrain herself for a while.

She managed until the end of November, when Fan Liu-yuan, as she had expected, sent a telegram from Hong Kong. Not until everyone in the Bais household had passed the telegram around did old Mrs. Bai send for Liu-su and give it to her. There were only a few words: "Please come to Hong Kong; the boat ticket has already been arranged by Tong Ji Long Company."

Mrs. Bai sighed deeply and said, "Since he wants you to go, you might as well go!"

Was she so cheap? Tears rolled from her eyes. With a cry, she suddenly lost her self control, realizing she couldn't stand it any longer. In one fall, she had already aged two years -- she couldn't afford to get old! Therefore she left her family to go to Hong Kong for the second time. But this time she had lost the cheerful and adventurous feelings that she had had the first time. She felt destroyed. Of course, everyone likes to feel subjugated once in a while, but that's only within a certain scope. If she had been overpowered only by Fan Liu-yuan's manner and looks, it would have been another story, but the most painful part was the pressure that her family put on her.

Fan Liu-yuan met her on the dock in the misty rain. He told her that her green transparent raincoat seemed like a bottle, and then added: "A medicine bottle!"

She thought he was sneering at her weakness, but then he whispered in her ear, "And you are my medicine." She blushed and gave him a cold look.

He had reserved her old room for her. That night when she returned to her room, it was already two o'clock. After putting on her night makeup, she extinguished the light and walked out of the washroom. Then she recalled that the bedroom light switch was at the head of the bed. Groping her way in the dark, suddenly she stepped on a leather shoe and nearly tumbled on the floor. As she was blaming herself for not putting her shoes in the proper place, she suddenly heard someone in the bed laugh out, "Dont't be scared! They are my shoes!"

Liu-su hesitated for a moment and asked, "What are you here for?"

Liu-yuan replied, "I've always wanted to look at the moon from here." ...The telephone call that night had been him for sure -- It hadn't been a dream! He did love her. This poisonous man, he did love her, but he didn't treat her any better than this! She couldn't help feeling bitterly disappointed and turned to the front of the dressing table. The slender late November moon was a white hook, like frost on the window. However there was still a bit of moonlight which shone on the sea, and reflected through the window onto the mirror, brightening it. Liu-su slowly took out her hairnet and fumbled with her hair which was all messed up. The hairpins all fell tinkling to the floor. She put the hairnet back on again, angrily pushing the end of the net into her mouth to hold it, and tightening her brows, she squatted down to pick up the pins one by one.

Liu-yuan walked up behind her barefoot. He put one hand on her head, turned her around and kissed her mouth. The hairnet slipped to the floor. This was the first time he had kissed her, but both of them suspected it wasn't the first time because it had happened numerous times in their fantasies. They had had several opportunities in the past --proper places, and proper atmosphere. He had thought about it, and she also had considered the possibility. Both of them had been very keen, but they had been taking things too carefully, and neither of them had been willing to be reckless. Now that it was happening, both became confused. Liu-su felt like she was walking round and round, finally bumping into the mirror, her back tightly pressed against the mirror. They seemed to fall into the mirror, into a dark world which was hot and cold at the same time, a world with wild sparks[82] that consumed their bodies.

The next day he told her that he was going to England in a week. She asked him to take her with him, but he answered that it was impossible. He suggested that he rent a house in Hong Kong for her, and after a year or so he would return. If she wanted to stay at home in Shanghai, he would agree to that as well. She of course wasn't willing to return to Shanghai. Those in her family -- the further the better. As for staying in Hong Kong by herself, if it was going to be lonely, it would be lonely.

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[82] The "wild sparks" here is the second meaning of "野火花" translated as "the wild fire flower" in other lines in this story. It is a pun that Eileen Chang uses deliberately.

The real problem would be when he came back; whether the situation would have changed or not had to depend on him completely. Could one-week's love win his heart? But, from another point of view, Liu-yuan was person who lacked consistency. This kind of quick matching and departing wouldn't give him a chance to be tired of her, which was to her advantage. One week was often more worthwhile to remember than a year. If he really came back to look for her carrying passionate memories, she might have undergone a change herself! A woman near thirty usually is unusually fascinating; however it fades at the twinkling of an eye. In brief, trying to hang on to a man for a long period without the guarantee of marriage was difficult and painful, just about impossible. Well, who cared! She admitted Liu-yuan was lovable and she found him wonderfully stimulating. Her purpose is staying with him, however, was economic security. On this point she knew she didn't have to worry.

They found a house on Babington Street located on the side of a hill. After the house was painted, they hired a Cantonese maid named Ahli. They purchased only a few essential items of furniture, and then it was time for Liu-yuan's departure. Everything else was left for Liu-su to manage in her good time. Since the kitchen wasn't ready yet, on that winter's night when Liu-su saw Liu-yuan off on the boat, she picked at some sandwiches in the ship's restaurant. Being totally depressed, Liu-su drank a few more glasses of wine than usual. Then with a sea breeze blowing in her face on the way back, she became a bit tipsy. When she entered the house, Ahli was in the kitchen heating water to wash the feet of the child, she had brought with her. Liu-su looked around everywhere. Wherever she went, she would turn on the light. The green paint on the living room door and windows was not yet dry. She tested the paint with her index finger and then stuck her sticky finger on the walls, each touch leaving a green print. Why not? This was not illegal! This was her home! She laughed, and felt she might as well put on a clear palm print on the dandelion-colored plaster walls.

With faltering steps she walked into the next room. Empty rooms, one after another -- it was empty world. She felt she could fly to the ceiling. Stepping on the empty floor was like moving on the dustless ceiling. The room was empty so empty that she couldn't help but fill it with light. Even with that she had to remember to change the bulbs for a few stronger ones tomorrow.

She went upstairs. It was good that it was empty. She was desperately in need of absolute quietness. She felt extremely tired; pleasing Liu-yuan was too tiring. His temper had always been strange, and because he had been carried away by emotion, he had become even more strange with her, never happy. He had gone, which wasn't too bad; it would let her have a chance to breathe deeply. Now she wanted nobody -- detestable people, loveable people, she wanted none of them. Since childhood her world had always been too crowded. Pushing, squeezing, stepping on, holding, carrying, old and young, there were people everywhere. There had been twenty or more in the family, all living together. Even if you cut your fingernails, someone would be watching through holes in the windows. It had not been easy to flee far away to this place where there was no one. If she had legally become Mrs. Fan, then she would have had all sorts of responsibilities and would never be able to get away from people. Now she was nothing more than Fan Liu-yuan's mistress, and didn't want to appear in public. She should avoid people and people should avoid her. As for being quiet, it certainly was; but the pity was that she wasn't interested in anything else besides people. The only thing that she had learned was to be a dutiful wife and a considerate mother. But here she was a soldier without arms. As for running her home, she actually had no "home" to run. As for looking after children, Liu-yuan didn't want any. As for being thrifty, she didn't need to worry about money. How then would she pass the time in the future? Would she look for Mrs. Xu to play mahjong or go to the opera? And later would she gradually have affairs with actors, smoke opium, and go the way of concubines? She stood up abruptly, straightened herself up with her two hands twisted tightly behind her back. No, she wouldn't be like that! She was not that low class. She would control herself. But...could she prevent herself from going mad? The three rooms upstairs and three rooms downstairs all arranged in a triangle were brightly lit. The newly waxed floor glistened like snow. There wasn't a soul! A room after another, the screaming emptiness... Liu-su lay on the bed; she thought about going down to shut off the lights but she couldn't move. Later on she heard Ahli, wearing her woodden slippers, coming upstairs, clicking off the lights as she went. Finally her strained nerves relaxed.

That was December 7th. On December 8, 1941, the cannons roared. Amid the cannon shots, the early morning, white, winter fog slowly scattered. On the mountain tops and in the valleys, everywhere on the island, people were all looking out at the sea saying, "The war's begun! The war's begun!" Nobody believed it, but in the end the war had started. Liu-su was living on Babington Street by herself, so how could she know anything? Not until Ahli picked up the news from the neighbourhood and woke her up in panic did she learn that the battle was already wildly raging. Not too far away from Babington was a scientific experimental station on whose roof was set up an anti-aircraft gun, the shells continually flew over screaming, "Rrrrrr..." and then, "Boom!" as they hit the ground. The shells screamed one after the other, "Rrrrrr..." as they cut through the air, and tore at nerves. The light blue curtain of the sky was torn into strips and pieces, fluttering in the cold wind. At the same time countless shattered nerve endings floated away on the wind.

Liu-su's house was empty; her mind was empty; and because there was no rice in the kitchen, her stomach was empty as well. The feeling of emptiness strenghtened her sense of fear. She tried to phone the Xus in Happy Valley, but she couldn't get through for a long time because everyone who had a phone was using it trying to find out which areas were safer so that they could plan an escape route. Liu-su didn't get through until afternoon, but although it rang and rang, nobody answered it. She thought Mr. and Mrs. Xu must have already left in a hurry, moving someplace where it was a little more quiet.. As Liu-su was running out of ideas, the shelling became even more ferocious. The anti-aircraft gun in the neighbourhood had become the target of those airplanes which were buzzing around the sky. "Bzzzzz..." they circled around and around, "Bzzzz..." as painful as a dentist's drill, the sound stabbed into the depths of their souls. Ahli, holding her crying child, sat by the living room doorsill. She seemed to be in an unconsciousness state, rocking to the left and the right, softly singing the songs in a dreamy voice and patting the child in order to calm him. Outside there was another "Rrrr...," and "Boom!" A corner of the eave was blasted off, scattering bits of rock in every direction. Ahli made a horrible cry, jumped up, and ran outside carrying her child. Liu-su caught up with her at the front gate, grabbed her with one hand and asked, "Where are you going?"

"I can't stay here! I...I'm taking her to hide in the sewer!" cried Ahli.

Liu-su yelled, "Are you crazy? You'll die!"

Ahli continued, "Let me go! My child...my only child...can't die...got to hide in the sewer..."

Liu-su held onto her with all her might, but Ahli gave a push and made Liu-su fall down. Ahli rushed out the door.

Just at that moment the sky split open with a violent roar which made the ground tremble. The whole world blackened just as though a huge trunk had clamped tightly shut, trapping countless agonies and hatreds within.

Liu-su was sure she had died; who would have guessed she would live! Opening her eyes, she could see that the sunny floor was covered with broken glass. She struggled up and went to look for Ahli. Ahli was tightly holding her child with her head dropped, her forehead against the cement wall of the doorway. She had been shocked silly. As soon as Liu-su pulled her in she heard the blast of another bomb which had fallen next door and had blown a big crater in the garden. Although the trunk was tightly shut, there was still no place to hide from the overwhelming noise. The "Bang, bang, bang" continued on and on. It seemed like someone was hammering nails into the cover of the trunk with a hammer, and the hammering never let up from dawn to dark and from dark to dawn.

Liu-su had also thought of Liu-yuan and wondered if his boat had made it out of the harbor or whether it had been sunk. Nevertheless, as she thought of him, she felt he was far, far away, just as if he were in another world. These present happenings were totally unrelated to her past, which was like a half sung song on the radio which had been interrupted by the hisses and cracks caused by a terrible storm. After exploding static had passed, the song continued on as before. She was just afraid that the song might have finished by that time, and there would be nothing left to listen to!

The next day, after Liu-su, Ahli and her child had divided up and finished the few cookies in the can, their spirits began to decline gradually. The whizzing fragments of the bullets made noise like someone had slapped their faces. A military truck chugged along down the street stopping, to everyone's surprise, in front of the door. When the doorbell rang, Liu-su opened the door herself. Seeing Liu-yuan, she grasped his hand and tightly held onto his arm just like Ahli holding onto her child. She fell forwards and banged her head on the concrete wall of the doorway.

Liu-yuan used his other hand to lift her head and hurriedly said, "Were you frigthened? Don't worry, don't worry! Go get some essentials then, we'll go to Repulse Bay. Hurry up, hurry!"

Liu-su urgently staggered insinde asking, "Is Repulse Bay okay?"

Liu-yuan answered, "Everybody say they won't come ashore over there. Besides, there is always enough food at the hotel; they usually store in great supply."

Liu-su again asked, "Your boat..."

"The boat didn't sail. They sent the passengers from the first class cabin to the Repulse Bay Hotel. Actually I was going to come to pick you up yesterday, but I couldn't find a car, and the buses were too crowded to get on. I had a hard time finding this truck today."

Liu-su couldn't settle down enough to pack the luggage, and at loose ends tied up a small bundle. Liu-yuan gave Ahli two month's wages telling her to take care of the house. After the two of them got on the truck, they lay face down, side by side on the floor in the cargo area and covered with a yellowish green oilcloth. The truck bumped along the way, and the skin of their elbows and knees was all rubbed off.

"This blast has blasted away the ends of many stories," sighed Liu-yuan.

Dejected, Liu-su didn't respond to him for a while. Then she said, "If you were blown up, my story would be finished as well. If I were blown up, your story would still go on!"

Liu-yuan laughed, "Did you intend to be a widow on my account?" The two of them were behaving a little out of the ordinary, and without any reason, they laughed heartily together. Once they had stated, they couldn't stop. Finally when they did stop, their bodies trembled all over.

Through the screaming of the steady stream of bombs, the truck eventually arrived at the Repulse Bay Hotel. The main floor of the hotel was occupied by the army. Liu-yuan and Liu-su still had the same room they stayed in before. After they had settled down, they discovered that although the hotel had stored many provisions, they were all for the soldiers. Aside from the cans of milk, beef, mutton and fruit, there were also loaves of white and whole wheat bread. All they had for the guests at each meal was two soda crackers and two cubes of sugar. Everybody was so hungry they were almost suffocating.

For the first two days, Repulse Bay could still have been considered peaceful. Afterwards the conditions suddenly changed, gradually becoming more intense. There was no shelter upstairs, so people couldn't find a place to protect themselves. Everyone came downstairs to stay in the dining hall whose glass door was wide open. In front, sandbags were piled up. The English soldiers set up a cannon there and were firing away. The warships in the bay located the cannon and returned the fire one by one. Across the palm tree and the fountain, the bullet zinged back and forth. Liu-su and Liu-yuan did as anybody else did, pressing their backs against the wall of the hall. The murky scene was like an old Persian rug. Every kind of person was woven into it: lords, princesses, brilliant men and beautiful women. The rug was hung up on bamboo rod facing the wind so that the dust could be beaten out of it. Wham! Wham! It was beaten with such force that the characters on it had no place to escape. When the bullets were shot here, they would run over there. When the bullets were shot there, they would run over here. At last the spacious hall had been blasted with thousand of holes. One of the walls had collapsed. They didn't have any place to run to now and could only sit on the ground and submit themselves to the will the Heaven.

Once Liu-su got to this stage, she regretted having Liu-yuan beside her. It seemed like she was one person with two bodies, and it doubled the danger as well. A bullet missing her might get him. If he died or became disabled, her outcome would be even more unthinkable. Because she was so afraid of burdening him if she were wounded, she could only harden her heart, looking for death. Even if she died, it wouldn't be as clean and easy as dying alone. She suspected Liu-yuan felt the same way. All she knew was that at this moment she only had him, and he only had her.

The fighting stopped. The men and woman trapped in the Repulse Bay Hotel slowly moved back toward the heart of the city. They passed yellow hillsides and red hillsides, and then more red hillsides and yellow hillsides. People nearly suspected they were on the wrong road and were circling back again. They were not however. The old road didn't have holes blasted in it which had been filled with rocks. Liu-yuan and Liu-su said little. Before, when they took a short ride in a car, they would have had a long talk. Now, even riding for a few dozen miles as they were, they had nothing to say. Occasionally one of them would have something to say, but before it was half finished, the other one would know exactly what was going to be said, and so there was no need to finish.

Liu-yuan said "look! On the beach!"

"I see it." Liu-su answered. Barbed wire entangelments were scattered here and there all along the beach. On the other side of the barbed wire, the white sea lapped up onto the pale yellow sand. The clear winter sky was a gentle blue. Now the season of those wild fire flowers was over.

"That wall..." Liu-su said.

"I didn't go to see it." replied Liu-yuan.

She sighed and said, "Never mind."

Liu-yuan got hot from walking. He took off his coat and hung it over his arm which also began to sweat.

Liu-su said to him, "You don't like the heat; let me carry it for you." If it had been a few days earlier, he absolutely would not have let her, but he wasn't the gentlemanly any longer, and so he handed it over. After they went a little longer, the hills became higher. They first wondered if it was the wind blowing the trees or if it was the movement of the clouds, but the yellowish green foot of the hill seemed to slowly get darker. When they paid attention, though, they noticed that it was neither the wind nor the clouds, but rather that the sun had leisurely crossed over the crest of the hill, covering half of its foot in a huge blue shadow. On the top of the hill a few houses were burning, and smoke appeared white; against the sunny part, it was black. In any case, the sun was just leisurely moving over the crest of the mountain.

When they arrived at home and pushed open the door which was already ajar, a flock of pigeons flew out of the house. Dust and pigeon dropping covered the hallways. Liu-su walked to the foot of the stairs, and cried out loudly, "Oh God!"

On the second floor her new trunk was wide open, lying askew. Two other trunks had fallen down the stairs. The foot of the stairs was buried in a flood of all kinds of clothes. Liu-su bent down to pick up a light, honey-brown velvet qipao which wasn't actually hers. It was full of sweat stains, burns from cigarettes and smell of cheap perfume. She also discovered some female stranger's belongings, old magazines, and an opened can of lichee whose syrup had spilled on her clothes. Had soldiers lived here before? English soldiers soldiers with their camp flowers? They seemed to have left in a great hurry. The local poor folk who looted door by door probably hadn't come, otherwise none of these things would have been left here. Liu-yuan helped her call Ahli loudly. The last grey-backed pigeon abruptly flew out through the door and out into the golden sunlight.

Ahli had disappeared to who knows where. Nevertheless the two of them had to go on without her. Before cleaning the house, they went out to grab something to eat. After a long time, they finally paid a stiff price for a bag of rice. Fortunately the gas supply hadn't been cut off, but there was no water. Liu-yuan took a lead bucket to get some spring water from the mountain in order to start cooking. From that moment they spent all their time busily cooking and cleaning the house. Liu-yuan was able to manage every job, sweeping and wiping the floor as well a helping Liu-su hang those heavy bed sheets to dry. The first time that Liu-su cooked, the food suprisingly carried a little bit of her hometown flavor[63]. Since Liu-yuan missed Malaysian food, she also learned to deep fry "Satay," and to make curried fish. Although they became more interested in food than ever before, they still tried their best to be frugal. Liu-yuan wasn't carrying many Hong Kong dollars with him, so as soon as there was a boat, they had to try to find a way to go back to Shanghai.

After the attack, living in Hong Kong was not a long-range plan. They muddled through the day at a hectic pace, but as soon as it was dark in this dead city with no lights and no human sounds, only the cold, fierce wind blew its three different notes: "Woo...Hoo...Ooo...," it cried endlessly. When one gust stopped, another would start again, The three were like three parallelled gray dragons. They flew forward in a straight line; their bodies extending so far that one couldn't see their tails. "Woo...Hoo...Ooo...," it cried until it ran out of dragons. But there was a stream of illusions which seemed to be an illusory bridge leading into darkness, into an empty void. Everything was in ruins.

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[63] In China, the food of each province or district has its own flavor. "Hometown flavor" means the particular flavor of one's place's cooking where the person comes from.

There was only debris, and the civilized people who had lost their memories, staggered and fumbled in the dusk as though they were looking for something, but actually, all was in ruins.

Clutching a quilt, Liu-su sat down and listened to the mournful wind. She was certain that the grey brick wall near the Repulse Bay Hotel was still standing. The wind had slackened, and it seemed as though those three gray dragons were resting on the top of the wall with their scales glittering in the moonlight. Seeming in a trance walked to the foot of the wall. Liu-yuan was approaching. Finally, she met Liu-yuan!...In this turbulent world, money, property, and everything else that would last as long as heaven and earth were all unreliable. The only thing that was reliable was the breath of life held in her and the man sleeping beside her. She suddenly climbed over to Liu-yuan, and embraced him through his quilt. He took his hand out from under the quilt and held her hand. Now they finally understood each other through and through, but it was only an instant of searching. An instant though that would be enough for them to live harmonously together for eight or ten years.

He was just a selfish man, and she just a selfish woman. In this age of military turmoil, there was no place for individualism, but there was always a place for an ordinary couple.

One day when they were out buying groceries, they ran into Princess Saheiyini. Saheiyini's face was a sickly yellow. She had carelessly made a bun with her loose braids. She wore a green cotton robe borrowed from heavens knows where. On her feet, however, she was still wearing the embroided, leather Indian sandals. She warmly shook hands with them, asked them where they lived now and was eager to see their new house. She noticed there were some small shucked oysters in Liu-su's basket, and she said that she wanted Liu-su to teach her to make oyster soup. Without thinking, Liu-yuan invited her over for supper, and she happily accompanied them. Her Englishman was in a concentration camp, and at the present time, she was living in the house of an Indian policeman whom she had known before and who had always helped her run errands. She had not eaten a full meal for a long time. When she called Liu-su "Miss Bai," Liu Yuan smiled and said, "This is my wife. You should congratulate me!"

"Really?" asked the Princess, When did you get married?"

Shrugging his shoulders, Liu-yuan replied, "We only put an announcement in the Chinese newspapers. You know, marriages in war time are always arranged in a haphazard fashion..."

Liu-su didn't understand what they were saying. Saheiyini kissed him and then kissed her. The meal was arranged quite simply, even though Liu-yuan still said that they seldom had oyster soup. From that time on, Saheiyini never visited again.

That day as they saw the Princess off, Liu-su stood in the doorway, with Liu-yuan just behind her. His hands covered hers, and he said, "I say, when shall we get married?"

Liu-su heard but didn't say a word. She bowed her head and some tears rolled down her face. Liu-yuan held her hands tightly and said, "Come, come. Let's go to the newspapers today and put in an announcement. But perhaps you would like to wait for a while, maybe until we return to Shanghai so that we can put on an elaborate wedding with all the trimmings and invite all of the relatives!"

"Pooh," Liu-su uttered, "They don't deserve it!" Saying this, she broke into laughter and fell back, leaning against his body.

Liu-yuan lifted his hand and stroked her cheek with his index finger making fun of her and said, "You're crying and laughing at the same time!"

The two of them went downtown together. When they approached a bend in the road, suddenly the road in front of them sank. There was nothing in front of them but a void -- except for the deep grey colored, moist sky. Nearby there was a small iron gate on which hung a ceramic sign which said, Dr. Zhao Xiang-ching, Dentist." The metal hanger off the sign squeaked in the wind; behind the sign, only the empty sky.

Liu-yuan stooped and looked for a moment. He felt the terror in that commonplace scene, and suddenly a shiver ran down his back. He said to Liu-su, "Now you should believe: 'Till death do us part.' How can we be the masters of our own fate? When they are bombing, if one had unfortunately..."

Liu-su interrupted in annoyance, "Even now, you're still talking about being unable to be your own master!"

Liu-yuan smiled and said, "I'm not beating a retreat! My meaning is..." He looked at her expression, laughed and said, "I won't say any more, no more!"

They continued walking, and then he spoke again, "It must be the doings of gods or ghosts that have made us really fall in love!"

Liu-su said, "You told me you loved me a long time ago."

Liu-yuan laughed, "That didn't count. At that time, we were too busy talking about love. How could we have the time to actually be in love?"

The wedding announcement came out in the newspapers. Mr. and Mrs. Xu came over to congratulate them. Liu-su wasn't very happy though, because during the siege of the city, the Xus had taken refuge in a safe area without caring a bit if she had lived or died. Nevertheless, she had to greet them with a smile. Liu-yuan arranged a banquet as a delayed wedding celebration for their friends' sake. Not long after, communications between Hong Kong and Shanghai were restored, so they were able to return to Shanghai.

Liu-su only went back to the Bai home because she was afraid that there were too many people and too many mouths which would make a lot of trouble. However, trouble was still hard to avoid. Fourth Madam decided to begin divorce proceedings against Fourth Master. Behind her back, everyone blamed Liu-su for it. Liu-su was divorced and remarried. It had been a shocking achievement! It was no wonder that others would want to follow her example.

Liu-su squatted down in the light and lit the mosquito coil. Thinking of Fourth Madam, she smiled.

From then on, Liu-yuan never joked around with her, he saved his wisecracks to tell other women. That was certainly a good sign. It indicated that he had completely taken her as one of his own family -- a bona fide wife. Nevertheless, Liu-su was still a little bit disappointed.

The fall of Hong Kong had helped her achieve her aim. However in this absurd world, who knew the reasons or the results? Who knew? Maybe just because the big city had wanted to help her accomplish her goal, it had been destroyed. Thousands of people had died; thousands of people had suffered, and what followed was an earth shaking change... Liu-su felt that she didn't amount to a pinhole in history. She just smiled and stood up, kicking the mosquito coil underneath the table.

The legendary women that caused countries and cities to fall had been like her. Although there are legends everywhere, they don't necessarily end happily like this.

A huqin was squeakily playing in a night full of a myriad of twinkling lights. Its melody busily ran up and down the scale telling such an endless and sorrowful story that it's better not to ask about it!

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